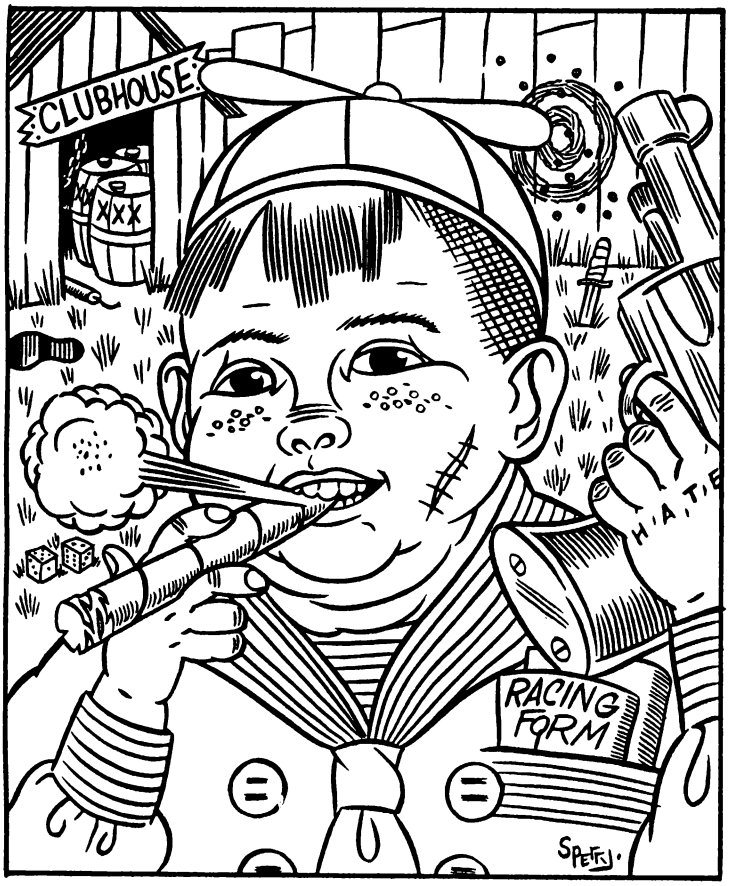
Murder Can Be Fun®

#17 — $4.98 JO $2.



Wanna play, Buster?

NAUGHTY CHILDREN

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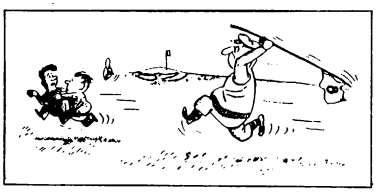

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This issue marks the slightly belated 10th anniversary of *Murder Can Be Fun*. Folks with long memories, mediocre taste, and pack-rat tendencies may recall that first humble effort which saw the light of day on March 11, 1986: 16 unbound photocopied pages (the stapler came later). "Typesetting" was something I did on my beloved manual typewriter, shrinking the copy on a photocopy machine in interests of economy. Headlines were clipped from *The National Enquirer* and *The Weekly World News*. Graphics were appropriated wherever possible. The cover story was about a nifty cheerleader murder in the local suburbs. Other stuff included a few words on a San Jose lynching, a look at teenage guilt novels (a subject still near and dear to my heart) and some book and movie (!) reviews. As a tribute to the confused quality of the front cover layout, *Factsheet 5* (itself then a much humbler publication) couldn't decide if the title was MCBF or *Sex, Drugs, and Death* and reviewed it under the latter.

Things could only get better. And most have. This issue is 48 pages of 600 dpi laser printing, arranged to the best of my limited graphical abilities using Winword 6.0. The design may not be great, but at least the lines aren't crooked. And thanks to the magic of 9-point type, I have managed to cram roughly eight times the text (and 20 times the research!) into only three times as many pages. The reader will have to judge for himself whether this latter advance represents an actual improvement.

Of course, one thing has indisputably gone downhill since the early issues of MCBF: publication frequency. At one point, I managed to more or less adhere to a quarterly schedule, although often at the expense of substantive content (#3 marked a low point of sorts). Frequency dropped slightly when I expanded to 20 pages, and took significant hits when I started the annual *Datebook* in 1987 and went to 32 pages with #9/10. Now MCBF is more or less an annual event, a situation I hope to improve.

But even with this distinctly unambitious schedule, this issue is way late. (When did #16 come out? May '96? And how late was it?). So, in keeping with one of the longest running traditions in the world of zines, I must offer some excuses. #1 is that I have found far more lucrative (but still not very) outlets for my rantings in publications you probably neither see nor care about. One can only spend so many hours at the keyboard, after all. Far more significant is Excuse #2. After living in a converted motel for 11 years, I have moved to a spacious flat in one of San Francisco's foggier neighborhoods. And not a moment too soon. Walking in the old place was becoming increasingly dangerous--teetering stacks of books threatened to cascade down upon the unwary at any moment. It was a great anti burglary device. I can just picture some poor second story man thinking, as the avalanche descended, "So this is what it feels like to be a Collyer brother."

I will leave the trials and tribulations of moving 100 boxes of books to your imagination. Let it just be said that the hard part wasn't the moving. It was the packing & unpacking. And now that I am safely ensconced in my new place, having designed, installed, and

reached capacity of the library, more time can be devoted to important things. Like future issues.

Attentive long-time readers will notice that this is the first regular issue of MCBF around a single theme. People always ask me, "What's the new issue going to be about?" The standard answer, of course, was whatever I felt like sticking in. But try explaining a hundred times that there's no theme. You'd get sick of it too. So for the past year, I've been answering "Naughty Children." But there's a twist. I never take the easy way out.

I first hit on naughty children when I was asked to contribute a list of the 10 all time worst kids to some project that never got off the ground. Some choices were obvious--Mary Bell and Jesse Pomeroy, for example. But holes remained, and I went to digging. And I was appalled. Much like any mindless reader of the daily papers, I thought the past 20 or 30 years had a near monopoly on juvenile savagery. Wrong! Digging through Depression-era papers, I found kids were knocking each other off right and left, along with the occasional parent or teacher. For fun, they torched schools, wrecked trains, and refined their torture techniques. But the story that really turned my crank were the newsboys who torched a comrade in Dallas in 1932. The poor little newsies had never seen *Fuzz, Reservoir Dogs* or even *Pulp Fiction*. Pre video nastiness indeed.

Thus, the theme: naughty children before 1960. Purists should be advised that the working definition of "Children" is 14 or under, though a few older teens creep in here or there. And even though Mary Bell was the true child of the '60s, I couldn't resist sticking in a few of her choice quotes. But in the pages that follow, you will meet dozens of the finest examples of vintage naughtiness. Knickers will never look so innocent again.

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Numerous parties have helped me in the endless quest for data on naughty children. First, DC who has not only had to endure endless recitations of history's choicest juvenile horrors, but suffered uncomplainingly through the installation of 100 yards of shelving (and counting!). Research material was graciously loaned by The Gs. of West Portal Books fame. Proofreading (yet another innovation) provided by DC and SduP, although in the flurry of last minute changes and such, I have no doubt introduced yet more mistakes. Don't blame me, blame my high school English teacher. Other tips of the Marr "America's Most Wanted" cap go out to "TS"A, R/S, MW, JB (scanner extraordinaire!) & LP, the Ds, ML, KB, KC, AR, TB, and various other sundry long-suffering souls.

cover art by Chuck Sperry

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NAUGHTY CHILDREN

They've Been At It Longer Than You Think

For many, children are visions of innocence untouched by evil. The sight of little gamins gamboling about, blissful in their ignorance of the dark side of life, is the very antithesis of murder and mayhem. They seem capable of no worse than a dinner-spoiling raid on a cookie jar or perhaps a childish argument over a toy.

This image has been tarnished in recent years. A series of highly publicized incidents of juvenile brutality have driven home the message that on the playing fields of youth, not all is butterflies and sunshine. From the savage killing of little Jamie Bolger at the hands of a pair of 10-year old boys in England to the Uzi-toting pre-pubescents of urban America, childhood has seemingly changed from an all-too short sojourn in a Garden of Eden into an Odyssey through a war zone.

Or so the pundits claim, as they find the roots of this social malaise in their favorite straw man. Conservative critics point to declining family values, "soft on crime" juvenile courts, and permissive values championed in popular culture as being behind the tidal wave of young, ill-mannered savages. Liberal commentators blame the fraying social safety net, media mega-violence, and brutal juvenile institutions that punish instead of rehabilitate. Both sides, however, agree on one thing. Kids didn't do things that bad when they were little.

But this increasingly ill-mannered debate overlooks one simple fact: children need no outside encouragement, no external inspiration to be bad. They can be very naughty even if--especially if--left to their own devices. There never has been, nor will there ever be, a shortage of little monsters. Parents have bemoaned the savage tendencies of the younger generation for over 3000 years. History is filled with stories of bad little boys and girls blowing things up, burning things down, and robbing, raping and pillaging with every bit as much abandon as their elders. Even in the innocent times, few are the felonies the little devils haven't tired their hand at.

Just like adult crime, the juvenile crime rate rises and falls. But it has always been there. Colonial times, the Gilded Age, the Roaring '20s, the Ozzie & Harriet '50s--no era was short on kids committing heinous offenses. Crime always vanishes under the light of nostalgia, and none so much as crimes committed by children. A safe rule of thumb is that there will always have been, and always will be enough naughty children for the resident mossbacks to whine about.

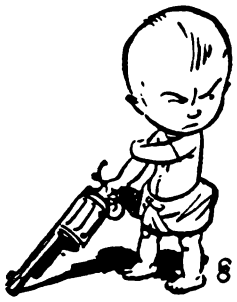
Kids may not kill as often as adults but this is due more their being inexperienced and ill-equipped than any excess of innocence. It's hard for a third grader to cap a fight at recess by bludgeoning his opponent to death with a baseball bat almost as large as himself. Not only are knives equally unwieldy, a kid's heart makes a mighty small target. And until recently, the rights of youngsters 2nd Amendment have been shockingly underexercised. Kids today with their 9mms and Uzis aren't badder, just better armed. Those poor little JDs of the '50s who made do with zip guns would have killed for that kind of firepower. If kids could get their hands on a nuclear bomb, they'd use it--probably on their school.

The most common targets of homicidally inclined children have always been other kids. In the sandbox, at the beach, on the playground--all these traditional venues of childhood are equally traditional settings for slaughter. Petty fights, childish arguments, and juvenile jealousy have all led to fatal results. Papers from colonial times through the present have always been filled of stories about

kids belaboring each other with guns, knives, even t-squares.

Nor are adults safe. Parents may kill far more of their offspring than vice versa, but the contest is no shutout. Thankless kids have offset their size disadvantage with everything from rifles to poison. All have proven sharper, or at least more effective, than a serpent's tooth.

Outside the home, the favored senior targets are teachers. Juvenile delinquents don't care less about school--they care more. While their better-behaved peers meekly submit to well-deserved discipline or brush off yet another sub-par grade, these young rascals purchase ammunition, incendiaries, or explosives and do something naughty about it.



Nor are all naughty children content with a single victim. The tired euphemism "children playing with matches" translates to "children trying to burn down buildings" for any kid above the age of six. All children love fires; some just aren't willing to wait for chance. In New York during the '30s, no less than 25% of the arson arrests were of kids under that age of 16, with one out of five not even 10 years old. Their elders can at least take heard in the fact that they weren't doing it for the insurance.

Children have been much less successful with explosives. Not only does building a bomb require considerable knowledge and skill, it's assembling explosives in one's bedroom. But even in the face of these daunting obstacles, kids have tried. One 13-year old boy in Cleveland in 1927 was stymied by the supply problem from achieving his goal: "I was going to make sure there would be no school to go back to this fall." More successful was an Detroit high school student four years later who successfully tested three devices at a local Serbian Catholic Church. There were no injuries, but the papers noted "one bombing caused a panic among worshippers." One can only imagine the direction these tests were heading.

But the deadliest kiddie crime in days of yore was train wrecking. During the first half of this century, it was an epidemic. Dozens of passengers and workers were killed, and millions of dollars worth of damage done. Kids have stoned, shot, derailed, and at least once tried to blow up, trains. It took a near complete collapse of the American rail industry to stop them.

The astonishing fact is, no one has ever been safe from the depredations of these baby-faced terrors. Over the past few hundred years, kids have demonstrated an innate flair for naughtiness that needs no encouragement. The innocent face of childhood is more than a facade; it makes it just that much easier to get away with murder.

A Note on Names

One of the difficulties in researching naughty children is the minimal coverage they have been accorded by the daily press. It's easy to accumulate a stack of clippings on the big names like Jesse Pomeroy, but your more obscure little thugs--good luck. You're doing good to find a story on whatever naughty thing they did, with a follow-up describing the confession obtained by police (always good for a few quotes!). But the ultimate disposition of their case--were they guilty? Insane?--you're out of luck.

I worry about jumping to conclusions. I would be mortally embarrassed to crank out a thousand words about the naughty deeds of Jimmy Smith based on the initial news clippings, only to discover that poor little Jimmy had been an innocent victim of circumstance and duly exonerated at the (unreported in the daily press) trial. And then there are numerous stories that don't even give names, only describing the perps as "a 10-year old Brooklyn resident." Publishing the names of juvenile suspects is an idea that comes and goes.

Thus, when I don't name names, it's because my sources give none (I hate it too.) When the perps are either dead or convicted, I give full names. In cases where there I haven't found any records of conviction, I take a page from the German press and cloud the issue by using their last initial. Hey, I *loved* it when they did it in *Christiane F.*

IT HAD TO START SOMETIME

America's First Juvenile Execution

Perhaps if young Thomas Granger had been more discreet, more circumspect, his name would have long since vanished in the mists of history. He was but a servant boy in the early days of Plymouth Colony, occupying the lowest socioeconomic rung in the New World. Nor were there any recorded hints about his being a potential American Dick Whittington*. He could expect to live a plain, unremarkable life leaving behind the scantiest of records: a name on a ship's passenger log, perhaps a brief note in a Bible recording a marriage and a crumbling gravestone in a colonial churchyard. Each day, as he went about the menial tasks reserved for a lad of 16 or 17, he rubbed shoulders with the giants of his day: the Standishes, the Mathers, the Bradfords. For these men, every recorded move, every transcribed utterance would be eagerly dissected and debated by future generations of historians. Not Thomas. Save one reckless moment, Thomas would have been long since forgotten. His name would interest only amateur genealogists bearing the Granger surname and, briefly, one anonymous Mormon diligently carrying out his church's divine mandate to baptize every person who ever lived.

But make his mark he did. Thomas Granger, mild-mannered servant lad, had the singular misfortune to go down in the history books as America's first *really* naughty child. No doubt other youngsters before him had violated the laws of both God and man. It was Thomas's poor luck to be the first one caught red-handed in the commission of a capital crime. Today, his deed would be but a minor offense. The worst he could expect would be probation and a few intensely embarrassing sessions with a psychologist. But to the Puritans, he was guilty of the vilest felony under Massachusetts law. The Founding Fathers saw no alternative but to elevate him to an obscure sort of immortality. Thomas Granger was the first Caucasian juvenile to be hanged in the New World.

The year was 1642. Young Thomas, like any normal teenage boy, seethed with lust. Hormones coursed through his veins; bawdy ballads and unmentionable fantasies filled his mind. It took only a glimpse of a trim feminine ankle or the sight of a carelessly revealed forearm to trigger intense, unnamable emotions and perverse desires in the randy lad. His dreams were undoubtedly white hot.

Tragically, his surroundings provided few outlets for his raging passions. From time immemorial, the number one complaint of teen boys everywhere has been sexual frustration. And Puritan Massachusetts, if not the worst time and place in American history for a fellow to get laid, must surely rank in the top ten. One can sympathize with Thomas and his fellow pimple-faced pubescents as they fought the battle between their primitive urges and their social mores against this bleak sexual landscape. It was a battle they had virtually no chance of winning; their only hope was to avoid detection by both God and man.

Thomas tried to be careful, stealthily confining his sins to quiet barnyards and remote fields far from prying Pilgrim eyes. There were no rumors, no gossip, no one to raise a voice against him as he surrendered and gave free reign to his passions. For weeks, months, perhaps a year, he went about his furtive practices undetected. But it came to an end suddenly one day when he was caught literally with his pants down. A colonist crossing a remote field stumbled across Thomas enthusiastically sodomizing a mare, no doubt as pornographic thoughts of a young strumpet named Eliza or

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* Three time Lord Mayor of London, circa 1400, who started out as a poor orphan distraught that the streets of London were not in fact paved with gold.

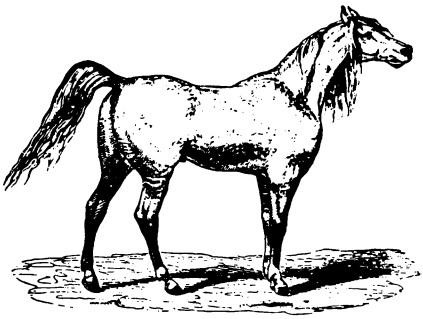
Prudence filled his head.

Needless to say, such villainy had no chance of going unpunished. Once the stunned witness recovered his wits, he headed directly to the proper colonial authorities. A complaint was lodged. Thomas was detained. His days as a practicing zoophile were over.

At first, he vehemently denied the charges, but the magistrates persisted. No record survives of their methods for extracting the truth. But in the end, Thomas broke and made a clean breast of things. No doubt to ensure the salvation of what was left of his immortal soul, he told the entire shocking story.

Yes, he shame-facedly admitted to his inquisitors, it was true. He had engaged in immoral congress with the mare as accused. And it hadn't been the first time, nor had the long-suffering mare been his sole victim. He had been introduced to the practice by a fellow farm worker who had many fond memories of his youth on a farm back in merry old England. Once he started, he couldn't stop. As quills flew furiously across parchment, he freely described dozens of unnatural acts with all manner of animals. When he finished, he had implicated no less than a cow, two goats, five sheep, two calves, and a turkey in addition to the mare. Unfortunately, the details of his crimes fell victim to the squeamishness of the times. His principal chronicler could only shudder when describing the indictment, writing "I forebear particulars."

The court itself had no such reservations. They wanted to know it all. Mere detail wasn't enough: they demanded that Thomas identify his erstwhile partners. The mare and the cows were easy. But the smaller animals would prove problematical. Despite the intimacy he had shared with them, Thomas was unable to describe them adequately. The authorities tried parading numerous sheep before the lad. But it was useless. Even to connoisseur like Thomas, all sheep looked alike. Apparently, they didn't even try to track down the goats or



the turkey.

Thomas repeated his confession to the ministers, and once more in open court for the edification of his undoubtedly horrified fellow colonists. It wasn't the notion of a sex crime that they found so disturbing; a pair of men had paid a heavy fine the previous year for raping two young girls. This "unnatural act", however, was a far more serious affair. Despite his tender years, Thomas was sentenced to hang.

But that wasn't all. In those pious times, his crime demanded more than the life of the man. God's justice was harsh in those days. The colonial fathers were intent on enforcing Leviticus 20:15 to the letter: "And if a man lie with a beast, he shall surely be put to death; and ye shall slay the beast."

Even by the standards of the era, Thomas's hanging on September 8 was a grisly affair. In keeping with the prescribed Old Testament penalty, the animals opened the festivities. Before Thomas's eyes, they slaughtered the mare, the cow, and the two calves. Least anyone be tempted to make use of the sinned-against flesh, the remains were thrown into a pit and buried. Then, apparently without any further ceremony, Thomas was hanged.

The Puritan colonists may have walked away from that gory spectacle, smug with the assurance that they had nipped an epidemic of youthful wickedness in the bud. But nothing could be further than the truth.

Not only would Benjamin Gourd, another Massachusetts lad of 17, share Thomas's fate for a similar crime 32 years later (his sentence read "the mare you abused before your execution in your sight shall be knockt (sic) in the head..."), a long line of children and teenagers, some 300 to date, would follow Thomas to the scaffold. And their crimes would be far, far naughtier than diddling with the livestock.

Bibliographic note: Thomas Granger merits at best a cryptic footnote describing him as a lad hanged for unspecified "unnatural acts" in most histories of the Pilgrim era. Apparently, the lengthiest surviving contemporary account appears in William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation*. Bradford, a former governor of the Plymouth colony, evidently witnessed Thomas's trial and execution. But beware! Thomas's tale has been expunged from many editions of Bradford's book, no doubt to avoid giving the undergraduates ideas. Also, for some reason, most modern books insist on giving his name as Thomas Graunger for no apparent reason.

RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD Pt. 1

On top of my schoolhouse, all covered with sand,
I hit my poor teacher with a big rubber band.
I hit him with pleasure, I hit him with pride,
I couldn't have missed him, he's 40 feet wide.
I went to his funeral, I went to his grave.
Instead of flowers, I threw a grenade.

--traditional school yard song

Blue bells, eevy, ivey, overhead
Mom's in the kitchen making bread,
While Daddy's in the parlor,
Cutting off his head.
How many chops did he receive?
1, 2, 3, 4.....

--traditional jump rope rhyme

Red stains on the carpet, red stains on your knife.
Oh Dr. Buck Ruxton, you murdered your wife.
The nursemaid she saw you, and threatened to tell.
Oh Dr. Buck Ruxton, you killed her as well.

--English topical rhyme circa 1950

Mary had a little lamb.
I threw it down the well.
Lit a stick of dynamite
And blew it all to hell.
Sound off 1, 2, 3, 4....

--jump rope rhyme

THOSE ARE MY STRAWBERRIES!

The Hannah Ocuish Story

Were Hannah Ocuish to live today, her crimes would be readily explained, if not outright forgiven. Her childhood incorporated all the clichés and every demographic of the youthful offender. Poverty, neglect, ignorance, discrimination: they all combined to ensure that Hannah would be a naughty little girl indeed.

Unfortunately, it was Hannah's poor luck to be born in 18th century America--a place where there were no dysfunctional families, no disadvantaged children. Our colonial forebears saw little need to debate causes in those simpler times. Everyone knew Satan was behind it all. Little girls like Hannah were wicked. The wicked were to be punished. And Hannah earned the harshest punishment they could mete. Unlike her contemporary, the proverbial little girl with the curl ("When she was very, very good..."), Hannah was never good. But when she was bad, she was truly horrid.

She was born in 1774 in Groton, Connecticut under unpromising conditions. Her mother, a full-blooded Pequot Indian, was best known for her chronic drunkenness and an odd habit of vanishing for months at a time. Her father, who was apparently white, had long since left the picture--probably simultaneously with the news of Hannah's conception. Yet Hannah's fate would far exceed the grimmest promise of her background.

She was barely six years old when she had her first recorded brush with the authorities. With poverty a perpetual concern in the Ocuish household, she pooled forces with her 8-year old brother to pick up a little extra money. Not for them were the slim wages paid child workers or the petty profits of sneak thievery. They preferred the more lucrative occupation of armed robbery. The baby-faced muggers debuted in their chosen profession by waylaying a small girl. Descending on the child like a pair of small, ferocious animals, they beat her brutally and tore her clothes and a small gold locket from her body. Both items were readily resaleable. But poor planning did them in. The robbery was barely complete before they started arguing at the scene over the disposition of the loot. Their blood-covered, half-dead victim took advantage of the distraction to escape with her life.

As a result of this little incident, the town fathers decided something had to be done. Both Hannah and her brother were removed from their mother's custody and put into what passed for foster care in pre-federal America: bound servitude.

Nothing further was ever heard of her brother. Presumably, he went on to a life marked by nothing worse than petty crime. Immortality would be reserved strictly for his little sister.

The year 1786 found Hannah working for and living with a widow outside New London, Connecticut. Now a big girl of 12, the intervening years of hard labor had made no discernible improvement in her moral fiber. According to one contemporary account, "Theft and lying were her common vices." Nonetheless, she appears to have confined this kicking up of her heels to her off-duty hours. There are no records of any complaints from her elderly mistress. However, Hannah had found far more satisfactory targets for what writers so gracefully described as her "maliciousness of disposition." She was the terror of the local subteen set. All about New London, the children were reportedly "very much afraid of her."

In June of that year, the happy cries of children filled the fields outside what was then little more than a pastoral village. Strawberry time had come to the land. The fields were filled with youngsters equipped with all manner of baskets, bags, and barrels, eagerly seeking the succulent

berries. Over hill and dale they scampered. With shouts of joy, they descended on bush after bush, quickly stripping them of the delicious fruit. No doubt as many berries wound up in red-stained mouths as in baskets and buckets. It was a scene straight out of a Winslow Homer painting, ripe with agrarian nostalgia.

In the midst of this gaiety, one little girl wasn't happy. Eunice Bolles was only six, perhaps not old enough to know better. But she did know that strawberries she'd so carefully picked were now in Hannah's basket. As modern observers, we can only speculate how this came to pass. Perhaps Hannah slyly filched the fruit. However, it is more likely she employed the traditional tactics of juvenile intimidation--bullying, if you will. It's easy to picture Hannah approaching the younger girl in a remote field and politely advising her she had a choice between a full basket of strawberries and a split skull.

If it had ended here, nothing more would have happened. Eunice probably would have grown up to be a respectable middle class matron while Hannah most likely would have wound up a disreputable servant or perhaps a well-worn alcoholic slattern. But Eunice did not intend to forgive and forget. Boldly bucking the juvenile social code's dire warnings about the slit tongues which await "tattle tales", she told. History does not record what punishment, if any, was meted out to Hannah. Whatever it was, it left her swearing a solemn oath to even the score. Unlike Eunice, Hannah was true to the code of her peer group. No neighborhood bully shall suffer a fink to live.

Hannah was in no hurry. She waited patiently, biding her time for the perfect opportunity. It came five weeks later. While she was out fetching water, Hannah spotted Eunice walking past her mistress's house en route to school. This was her big chance. Quickly rushing inside, she put down the bucket and hastily grabbed a small piece of calico cloth. Vengeance was about to be hers.

Eunice was 100 yards down the road when Hannah came out. Hidden by a stone wall, she sprinted across the garden and jumped over the wall to confront the smaller girl. Perhaps the little girl was startled by this sudden appearance of her erstwhile tormentor. But Hannah was no fool; she knew the value of a delicate, strategic approach. Making a pretense of letting bygones be bygones, she cunningly concealed her malicious intent behind a mask of smiles and the calico cloth. Here, Eunice, she probably said in her most beguiling tones. Look what I have for you.

Eunice was completely taken in by this "new" Hannah. Like a horror movie actress investigating a noise in a darkened cellar, she was magnetically drawn to the older girl, her eyes glued to the gaily colored fabric. She didn't noticed Hannah's other hand--the one with the rock--until it was too late.

Hannah brought the stone down on her head with a tremendous blow, stunning the smaller girl. In a state of raging fury, she continued to strike the cringing child, even as she protested "Oh, if you keep beating me so I shall die." This heart-rending plea probably only encouraged Hannah to redouble her efforts. For murder was the whole idea.

Eunice finally collapsed in a crumpled heap. Her head and body were badly mangled and both her back and one arm broken. Hannah, stepped back and triumphantly admired her handiwork, undoubtedly thinking "that will teach her." But like so many killers before and since, Hannah had underestimated the magnitude of her task. Eunice began to stir. Hannah was startled, but managed to keep her cool. Mindful of what happened the last time she didn't finish a job, she grabbed the little girl by the throat and squeezed until any lingering doubts were gone. Then, to make things look good, she piled rocks from the nearby stone fence atop the body. As she strolled back to her mistress's house, she probably was smug in her cleverness at making Eunice's murder look like the result

of a collapsed fence.

A passerby discovered the body a few hours later. As a nearby resident, Hannah was one of the first people questioned. She was prepared. Why yes, she told investigators, she had noticed something unusual that morning. She had spotted four boys had trespassing in her mistress's garden. Ever the loyal and faithful servant, she shouted at them until they fled. And not too long afterwards, she heard a strange sound, much like the noise of stones falling from a fence. Why, that must have been when the fence fell onto the poor little girl!

The prominent finger marks on Eunice's throat ruled out the possibility of an accident. The four boys seemed likely suspects. But no trace of them could be found. Playing a hunch, the investigators tried some hardball with Hannah the next day. They confronted her with the result of her deed, taking her to the house where Eunice's battered corpse was lying in state. Not too surprisingly, Hannah broke down and told them everything, from the strawberries to the stones.

The trial was one of the more bizarre spectacles to grace a colonial courtroom. With the concept of juvenile court over 100 years in the future, the trial was conducted under standard adult criminal process. Nonetheless, even the most dedicated advocate of the "children are just little adults" theory popular at the time found the spectacle of a 12-year old girl on trial for her life somewhat disconcerting. Contemporary accounts describe emotions (sympathetic, mind you) running high in the audience. Even the judge himself was reported often near tears. The calmest person in the courtroom was Hannah herself*, who remained cool and apparently unconcerned throughout the hearing.

The judge may have been misty, but he managed to keep any trace of sentiment out of his decision. In reviewing the evidence,

he found elements of malice, premeditation and a pretty good darn good try at concealing the crime. He admonished Hannah that

> ...you must consider and realize it, that after death you must undergo another trial infinitely more solemn and awful than what you have passed through, before that God against whom you offended--at whose bar the deceased child will appear as a swift witness against you.

Despite this plain situation of double jeopardy, he continued his sentence:

> ...the sparing of you, on account of your age, would...be of dangerous consequences to the public, by holding up an idea that children might commit such atrocious acts with impunity.

Even back then, adults worried about outbreaks of homicidal mania among the hoop & hopscotch set if they thought they would get off easy. With a final roar of judicial thunder, he roared his verdict, sentencing her to "be hanged with a rope by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead..."

Back in her cell, Hannah's tough chick facade cracked when someone explained they really meant the part about hanging her by her neck. She found this very upsetting and was inconsolable for the rest of the day.

* Most modern accounts suggest that Hannah may have been retarded. But, as we shall see, many naughty children just don't take trials seriously.

A Few Words Before We String You Up

Selections from Henry Channing's Gallow-side Sermon for Hannah Occuish

The cry of innocent blood hath *entered into the ears of the* **Lord** *of Sabaoth*; but this day will silent its claims. Yes; in a few hours, will be executed the fatal, the tremendous sentence which puts a period to the life of one, who had never learned to live.--In the beginning of life, a *murderer*...

Yes; my brethren, this poor prisoner, when committed to gaol, appeared to have no higher principle than the pleasure of gratifying her ungoverned passions. And so far from having the fear of GOD her eyes --*Oh tell it not in Gath!*-- she hath repeatedly declared to me, that she did not know that there was a GOD, before she was *told* it after her imprisonment.

For, the ear of the children of men, being *fully set in them to do evil, they hearken not, nor incline their ear. We have loved* pleasures, *and after them will we go.*

...those under our care should be early inspired with sentiments which will raise them superior to irregular desires, and *fleshy lusts which war against the soul.* These too often like a strong man armed take captive the unguarded Youth, and lead him to the *strange woman, whose house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.*

A bad natural disposition if not early subdued will, 'ere long, bring forth nothing but briars and thorns, to pierce a parent's heart with many sorrows.

Withhold not correction from the child, saith Solomon, *for if thou beatest him with the rod he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell.* (Proverbs 23: 13, 14)

Appetites and passions unrestrained in childhood, become furious in youth; and endure *dishonor*, *disease*, and *untimely* death...

But if you are not yet alarmed for your helpless offspring... go into our streets and... behold on every side children unrestrained practicing iniquity *with greediness*.

Children that have but just learned to speak are heard lisping forth horrid oaths and impious curses.

We have here a striking evidence of the depravity of human nature; that we are indeed *transgressors from the womb*.

But by the next morning, she was her old, carefree self again. Apparently someone else told her no way; she was a cinch for a reprieve. She could go back to her jailhouse routine, which may have been the happiest days of her life. She didn't have to work, got lots of attention, and could even play with the children who came to visit. And she took no sass from the adults. One observer commented she "frequently would make very shrewd turns upon those persons who made severe remarks upon her."

Reality sank in about two weeks before the hanging. Hannah realized there would be no reprieve, no rescue. On December 20, less than five months after the killing, she was taken from her cell and marched out before a crowd behind the New London meetinghouse.

Hanging was not the only punishment awaiting her. Before the main event, Yale minister Henry Channing harangued Hannah and the assembled New Englanders with an amazing sermon the colonists saw

fit to preserve for posterity. He ranted for well over an hour, illustrating the fate of children with poor church attendance with readings of every Bible verse involving a naughty child, a spared rod, and a nasty end. Not neglecting his younger listeners, he pointed to Hannah and said:

> There behold, my young brethren, the fate of one, who, with a mind not below the common level, has been left unrestrained to the guidance of guilty passions and a corrupt heart...

Oddly enough, he directed much of his wrath at blasphemy. At one point, he almost shrieked the text of Exodus 20:7: "THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLESS THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN."

At the end of his sermon, he brought his heavy ecclesiastical cannons to bear on the quivering prisoner. "Hannah," he thundered, "the time for you to die is come." And that would be far from the end of her troubles.

> You will soon see that there is a great GOD who...is angry with the wicked every day, and will punish forever those whose sins are not pardoned before they die.

And apparently ignorance of God was no excuse. He warned the cringing girl:

> "If he is not more merciful than you, your soul cannot be saved... He sees nothing in you but wickedness--a poor wicked creature covered with the innocent blood of a helpless child crying to you for mercy...."

Small wonder that witness reported Hannah looking "greatly afraid and seemed to want somebody to help her."

Eventually Channing ran out of hellfire and brimstone and the ordeal. With what must have been at least a small sense of relief, Hannah quickly thanked the sheriff for her kind treatment in the jail and stepped up on the gallows. Within moments, she set a record. At 12 years and 9 months, she remains the youngest girl ever executed in the United States. She may not have been the naughtiest girl in American history, but one can only react with awe at her precocity.

Don't Let the Baby Play with Matches

THE HIDDEN HAZARDS OF MONOPOLY

Meadville, PA, 1943: George F., 10, and his pal Conrad were whiling away a slow Christmas vacation afternoon over a pleasant game of Monopoly when hostilities broke out. History does not record the event precipitating this tragedy; we can only speculate that it involved Boardwalk and several houses, or perhaps a hotel. Conrad struck George; George ran across the street, grabbed his father's revolver, and shot Conrad through the heart. Conrad ran out onto the street, collapsed and died. The rent remained uncollected.

WHEN SPANKING WASN'T ENOUGH

Capital Punishment For Kids: Some American Highlights

YOUNGEST CHILDREN EXECUTED

Open Division: Unfortunately, many American newspapers in the 18th and much of the 19th centuries apparently considered public executions as subjects unfit for coverage, despite the huge crowds these spectacles drew. Only the scantiest details have survived about the youngest American to go to the gallows. Evidently in September 1859, a 10-year old was hanged in Louisiana. Sadly, the lesson that his fate may have taught younger generations has been lost, as there is no record of just what his offense was. We can only presume it was quite naughty. No doubt he took comfort in the fact that the speedy justice of the day spared him the unpleasant prospect of celebrating a birthday in jail, complete with a rousing game of pin the tail on the warden.

Second place for the youngest child executed is a tight battle between no less than three 12-year olds: the redoubtable Hannah Ocuish (see "Those Are My Strawberries") and two slave boys: Godfrey and Clem. Boys and girls, your birth certificates please...

Godfrey was only 11 when he whipped out a hatchet and killed a 4-year old white boy he was baby-sitting. He had turned 12 by the time he was hanged in Alabama on July 16, 1858.

12-year old Clem did Godfrey one better. He had an argument with his master's son in Virginia one day in 1787. The white boy ended the battle, but not the war, by hitting Clem with a stick. But Clem was not one to suffer defeat or humiliation gracefully. He had his revenge the next day, beating both his antagonist and, for good measure, another of his master's sons to death. He was hanged not too long after the twin killings on May 11, 1787.

Girl's Division: Hannah Ocuish, 12, of course. She is one of but three girls under 16 executed in American history. The other members of this elite, albeit naughty sorority are Milbury Brown, a 14-year old black girl who went to the gallows in South Carolina in 1892 for killing a white baby, and a slave known only to history as Eliza. In 1867 when she was 13, she used a brick to cave in the head of a 2-year old babe she was minding. She was hanged in Kentucky on February 7, 1868.

20th Century: Thanks to suspiciously speedy justice, George Stinney, a 14-year old black boy from Alcolu, South Carolina earns this title. On March 24, 1944, two white sisters, ages 11 and 8, were riding a tandem bicycle when they stopped to ask George where they could find some wildflowers. He led them to a suitably isolated spot and started putting the moves on the older one. When she resisted, he grabbed a foot long railroad spike, killed the younger girl with a few quick blows to the head and tried to rape the older one. Force proved no more effective than persuasion, so he caved her head in with the same spike, tossed the bodies in a ditch, and went home.

At this point, shift to warp drive. Searchers found the bodies early the next morning. George was quickly arrested and signed a confession almost immediately. His was tried barely a month later. His court-appointed lawyer, plainly indifferent to the fate of his youthful client, mounted virtually no defense. The jury convicted George after a mere 10 minutes of deliberations and his attorney promptly quit the case. He didn't even bother to tell the Stinney family they could appeal and get an automatic 1-year stay of execution.

George was electrocuted on June 16 after the governor refused clemency. According to an AP report, "the guards had difficulty strapping the boy's slight form

into the wooden chair built for adults...it was difficult to attach the electrode to his right leg." It had only been 85 days since the murders.

YOUNGEST AT TIME OF CRIME

Open Division: There are two contenders for the coveted designation of being hanged for offenses committed at the tenderest age. One, of course, is the above referenced anonymous 10-year old Louisianan from 1859.

Only one other person went to the gallows for misbehaving at age 10: James Arcene, a full-blooded Cherokee Indian. It took justice quite a while to catch up with the youthful miscreant--so long, in fact, that he was no longer one bit youthful.

James sealed his fate one day in 1872 when he and an adult companion, William Parchmeal, spotted laborer Henry Feigel coming out of a store in Tahlequah (then Indian Territory; now Oklahoma). They followed him to a suitably lonely spot and clobbered him over the head with a rock. James then pulled his gun and eliminated their victim with four shots. He later claimed Parchmeal made him do it. Parchmeal, on the other hand, maintained to the end that James had pulled out his little gun entirely on his own initiative. The May-December robber duo netted some 25¢ and a bindle of old clothing for their trouble.

It wasn't worth it. 13 years later, a deputy US Marshall became interested in the old, unsolved murder and managed to pin it on Parchmeal and Arcene. No one was surprised as both apparently had compiled lengthy records in the interim. Parchmeal confessed, hoping for leniency. He didn't get it. Both Parchmeal and James, then 23, were hanged for the 13-year old murder.

Girl's Division: Hannah "Strawberry" Ocuish and Eliza (discussed above) are the only American girls executed for crimes

committed when they were 12. Milbury Brown (see above) is the only other American girl in U. S. history to be sufficiently before her 16th birthday to warrant actual execution.

20th Century: By a matter of months, Fortune Ferguson edges out George Stinney (see above) to capture the 20th century division crown. Fortune was only 13 or 14 when he raped (but didn't kill!) an 8-year old white girl in Florida in 1925. Fortune being black, clemency was never an option. He managed to keep his appeals going long enough to avoid being the youngest person executed in the 20th century, but his sentence was ultimately upheld. He was 16 when he was executed on April 27, 1927.

THE ULTIMATE JUVENILE EXECUTIONS

Perhaps, strictly speaking, the following tale doesn't involve the execution of children. The youngsters involved were all above the age of 14, full-fledged teenagers in anyone's book. But they were all under 18, and the event is unique, bizarre, and little known. I couldn't resist. Unarguably,

the events of June 25, 1880 in Canton, Ohio, represent the high-water mark in America's execution of juveniles. It will probably remain unsurpassed, much to the sorrow of many talk-radio hosts and their callers.

The first part of the story begins the previous year with George Mann, 16, and Gustave Orr, 15. They were boy tramps of the Gilded Age or what we would call nowadays teenage runaways. They had been bumming with an older hobo when they decided to make a profitable change in the make-up of their traveling group. On June 27, 1879 near Alliance, Ohio, they beat their traveling companion to death with a train coupling pin and split his meager possessions between themselves. They were quickly caught. In a no-nonsense display of Ohio justice, they were duly tried and sentenced to hang.

Meanwhile, an equally unsuccessful pair of robbers were plying their trade in town. John Sammett, 17, and pal Christopher Spahter broke into a saloon for some burglary. Of course, both were caught. In jail, Chris turned fink and agreed to testify against his erstwhile partner in crime in exchange for a reduced sentence. John did not appreciate this betrayal. As soon as he got out on bail, John crippled the State's case against him by shooting and killing their star witness, his former friend. This was not a sound move. When the legal dust cleared, instead of facing a few years' at the state pen, he found himself scheduled to hang for murder.

We can only assume that some bright boy down at the Canton Chamber of Commerce (Canton being the county seat) recognized the festive potential of this judicial coincidence. At the time, executions were public affairs popular with the crowds. And, as any good promoter knows, there's nothing like injecting a fresh novelty element into a tried and true event to make the turnstiles spin. Somewhere in Canton, we can picture a light bulb going on over the head of some civic-minded booster. W*hy not hang all three teenagers at once?* Why, it'll be *great* for business. And we all know that's the real business of America.

A triple scaffold was erected in the center of Canton. On the morning of June 25, festive throngs filled the streets of the sleepy Ohio city. A crowd estimated at 10,000 came from points as far removed as Pittsburgh and Chicago to witness the solemn fate of the three lads. And lest the atmosphere grow too heavy, a circus specifically changed their route to play Canton the day of the hanging triple-header, providing the revelry's penultimate touch.

Before the excited multitudes, the three teens were led to the scaffold and nooses put about their necks. Then, at 11:35, the lever was pulled. The trap doors underneath each teen sprang open simultaneously. In perfect synchronicity, the trio hurtled down until the ropes about their necks stretched taut, bringing them to crisp, fatal halts. After they were cut down, their bodies were displayed in state for most of the afternoon to allow spectators to get a closer look.

This was not the first, nor the last mass execution in US history; that honor went to three Nazi POWs hanged in 1945 for beating a fellow POW to death. But it remains the only mass execution with a conscious theme, a tribute to the go-getter mindset of the Gilded Age. Only in America.

THE LITTLEST KILLER

Providence, 1921: While playing in the backyard, John B., 3, wrapped one end of a cord around the neck of a 3-year old girl and the other around a grindstone axle. He then turned the handle until the little girl was throttled to death. He later explained his actions to the police in a childish lisp: "I don't like her anymore."

DON'T GO NEAR THE WATER

The Fine Art of Juvenile Drowning

Large bodies of water hold a universal fascination for children. Any parent knows the promise of a trip to the shore can bring a smile to the face of the grumpiest child. In areas lacking convenient access to a major body of water, the youngsters congregate around anything larger than a rain puddle, be it a dappling brook, an iridescent chlorinated pool, or a stagnant open sewer. Does any sight epitomize the innocence of childhood more than a gang of shrieking, naked pre-pubescent boys diving into a remote swimming hole?

But all too often, this *Saturday Evening Post* scenario provides the perfect setting for tragedy. The shouts of glee can turn to screams of terror in an instant. Within minutes, the sounds of frantic splashing and frenzied cries taper off into a series of heart-stopping chokes and gurgles. The cold, cruel waters have claimed another youthful victim.

Most of these drownings are blamed, directly or indirectly, on adult negligence: mediocre swimming instruction, poor supervision, and the absence of lifeguards. But these are just cosmetic explanations masking the terrifying truth. Behind many of these grim dramas--far more than people are willing to admit--is a sniggering child, grinning wickedly as authorities drag the lake for the victim of his clever handiwork. When it comes to pulling pranks around the swimming hole, some children just aren't satisfied with tying knots in the moistened clothes of their companions.

The drowning of playmates is a long-standing, deeply rooted tradition in the secret world of kids. No one knows how many "diving accidents" are deliberate pushes, how many "poor swimmers" really came up loser in a ducking contest. Water is a favorite weapon for naughty children of all stripes. Budding psychopaths make it the setting for their first childish experiments; pugnacious little boys use it for a final solution to a childish score. For centuries, many a grievance has been settled, many a dull afternoon livened up with some unfortunate youngster gurgling his way to a watery grave.

Some of these aquatic fatalities can be chalked up to simple, Frankenstein monster-like curiosity: do little girls float? But even as the most angel-faced gamin protests his innocence, suspicion lingers. For water is the sub-teen killer's ultimate weapon. It is difficult for a lad weighing barely 60 pounds to bludgeon someone to death. Knives, besides being messy, require a certain amount of skill for proper use. And until recently, guns were seldom available, handy, or affordable. Drowning, on the other hand, requires no more than a convenient body of water and a keen sense of timing. As an added bonus, it is all but undetectable. Once any little witnesses are terrorized into silence, the baby-faced murderers are free to clip newspaper accounts of yet another aquatic tragedy.

No less a legend than Peter Kürten, the "Monster of Düsseldorf", who killed nine people in and around Düsseldorf during the Weimar years, supposedly got his start this way. During his boyhood in Cologne, he claimed he pushed a comrade off a raft. When his other companion dove in to save the struggling youth, he shoved the would-be rescuer under the raft and cleverly maneuvered the craft to claim two victims in one fell swoop. Within moments, Kürten knew he had discovered his calling. A psychiatrist at his trial admitted this scenario is far from unusual.

One of the most common settings for juvenile drownings involves young servants and their master's children. In 19th century England, it was almost commonplace for younger members of the below-the-stairs crowd to act out workplace frustrations on

the boss's kids at the nearest handy body of water.

The most notorious young thug in this endeavor was 13-year old William Wild. In 1835, his parents had sent him to work for a family named Smith on their farm outside Castle Broughton. And he hated it. He ran away after only two weeks. Forcibly returned, he nourished a simmering resentment. He would have his revenge within the fortnight.

On the day of the murders, he had already been berated for not cleaning the house properly. His mistress compounded the insult by ordering him to fetch her daughters, ages 3 and 1½, from a neighboring field where they were playing. Put-out William retorted "I'm no maiden," but went to get the girls anyway.

He returned empty-handed, informing Mrs. Smith "You had better fetch the children, I can't get them. They would cry their hearts out if I offered to bring them." The former part of this statement may have been literally true, but the latter most certainly wasn't. Mrs. Smith found her children floating face-down in a water-filled pit on a nearby farm. William eventually confessed to throwing them in, muttering to the Smiths "You shouldn't have fetched me after I ran away." His death sentence was later commuted to transportation for life* .

Nor were children any safer with maidservants. Maggie Messenger, also 13, matched William murder for murder. She had worked for a family in Carlisle, England for less than three weeks in 1881 when the couple's 2-year old son drowned in a shallow well. A cursory investigation determined the death accidental. Six days later, the parents left their surviving child, an infant of 6 months, in Maggie's care. When they returned that afternoon, they found Maggie full of explanations, but no baby in sight. First, Maggie claimed a man had grabbed the child from her. Then she said the baby had run off while she dozed. A quick search turned up the infant lying face down in a nearby bog, suffocated. Footprints matching Maggie's were found on either side of the body, perfectly positioned for straddling the infant while shoving her face into the muck.

Maggie was convicted of the second killing. She is best remembered as the last person under 16 to be sentenced to death in the United Kingdom. Her sentence, however, was eventually commuted to life imprisonment.

American kids are equally adept in recognizing the homicidal potential of water. In a story that, up to a point, oddly presaged a "Leave It To Beaver" plot by some 25 years, a 7-year old boy set out from his home in the posh Philadelphia suburb of Germantown on Mother's Day, 1937. The young lad was going to pay his respects to his grandmother in nearby West Philadelphia. He was dressed for the occasion in the height of juvenile splendor: spiffy blue suit, neat tie and, the piece de resistance, a red carnation.

Yet, somewhere along the way, the innocent gamin was led astray. The agent of temptation was one 9-year old James B., who would be described by the police as an "incorrigible" lad. But James was not the typical dirty-faced street urchin. He had had a genuine brush with celebrity. The previous summer, he'd written President Roosevelt a heart-rending letter, describing how he'd worn out his only pair of shoes trying to see the President speak at Franklin Field. The tale touched FDR's heart and his press agent's promotional instincts. A complimentary pair of shoes was dispatched from Hyde Park to Philly pronto. And you can be sure it was a well-publicized pair of shoes.

They must have made an odd pair, wandering into the Woodlands Cemetery on the banks of the Schuykill River: James of the well worn presidential shoes and the younger child of privilege, resplendent in his Sunday best. But there was a method to James's madness. The younger boy's outfit had already branded him. "He was a sissy,"

* The quaint English term for banishment to Australia

James would later tell police. And James could not abide a sissy.

When the boy didn't show at his grandmother's, police first suspected a kidnapping. But with the help of witnesses, they closed in quickly on James. At first James denied everything, telling a succession of stories that only increased in implausibility. Finally, he confessed, leading them to the spot on the riverbank where he pushed the boy in.

Of course, not all watery homicides are the end result of careful planning. Countless children have found the waters closing over their heads just because they had the poor luck to lose an argument with the wrong person a little too close to the lake. Naughty children know that the one fool-proof way to win a debate is to kill one's opponent. Countless youngsters have found there is no stronger support for their logic than a convenient body of water.

One early case comes to us from Liverpool in 1855. A group of nine boys were amusing themselves by playing "cap on back", a Liverpudlian variant on that classic game of childhood, leapfrog. This was more than a childish pastime. Subsequent events proved they take their "cap on back" very seriously on the banks of the Mersey.

In the midst of the keen competition, a shrill voice of anger cut through the boyish merriment. Alfred Fritz, 9, loudly accused 7-year old James Fleeson of making an unfair jump. Young James heatedly denied the charge, saying his jump was as fair as any of Alfred's. After a few exchanges, Alfred diplomatically suggested they resort to the customary childhood means of resolving such disputes: the takeover. James, clearly affronted, refused; he was "too tired."

This only further inflamed Alfred's passions, already near the boiling point due to the contest. Seizing a piece of brick, he struck the James on the forehead, knocking him down. As the smaller boy lay prostrate on the ground, protesting feebly, Alfred emphasized his point by letting him have it again.

It was at this point that the foolhardiness of James's dispute became apparent. No more than 50 yards from the scene was a canal. In his charming Liverpudlian accent, Alfred called to his friend, 9-year old John Breen, saying, "Let's throw him into the canal or else we'll be cotched." One took the semi-conscious boy by the hands, the other seized his feet. As their six playmates watched, they carried James over to the bank and with a quick heave-ho, he was in the water. After a brief struggle, James's head slipped beneath the surface--permanently.

Perhaps it was testimony to the truth of Alfred's charge that none of the other six lads raised a voice in protest. After all, no one likes a cheater. Five witnesses would go on to play "River's Edge" for a while and keep their silence. Only a sixth boy (there's one in every crowd) couldn't keep the secret and spilled the beans to his parents that evening. Alfred and John were later convicted of manslaughter.

Idle boasts are as deadly as heated arguments. Details are scanty, but in 1931, three 9-year old boys set out from the heart of Harlem to celebrate the Fourth of July holiday on the banks of the Harlem River. Sadly, one little fellow just could not shut up about what a *great* swimmer he was. So one of the trio, Hallie H., demanded that he put up or shut up. But this young scamp didn't put his challenge into mere words. With unspoken eloquence, he simply shoved the braggart in into the dark and

dirty waters.

The results of this challenge quickly demonstrated that the boy's ability to talk far outstripped his ability to swim. So inept were his efforts that the third boy dived in a poorly advised effort to save him. But the first lad struggled so furiously that he dragged them both under. At first, the twin drowning was dismissed as just another unfortunate accident. But the word about what really happened was out on the street. Soon the police were knocking at Hallie's door.

But by far the naughtiest motive behind far too many juvenile drownings is amusement. Aquatic activities can forestall boredom, the bane of youth, for so long. One can only play so many games of "Marco Polo" before tedium sinks in. The mysteries of the shore quickly pale; after a few hours of shrieking children, all aquatic and amphibious life have long since fled. The shells and driftwood start looking the same, and the stone-skipping record appears unbreakable. Even the splash wars become forced and strained. It's at times like these when young minds turn to thoughts of homicide. Adults kill for hundreds of different motives, good, bad and indifferent, but seldom just to break the monotony.

Perhaps the classic recreational drowning occurred in Lowell, Massachusetts in 1925. A fine spring afternoon found 9-year old Johnny V. and his little pal Milt, who was only 6, goofing off on the banks of the Merrimac River. Undoubtedly, by the time they answered the summons of history, the two young scamps had already run through the complete retinue of childish riverside amusements. Bare toes had wiggled in mud, stones had skipped across the water, fish had evaded improvised hooks. The lads itched for something new, something different. As they later told police, they were ready "for excitement."

They found it by adding a new, original twist to an ancient game. For thousands of years, small boys have whiled away many a seaside hour by constructing small crude crafts of flotsam & jetsam. After setting them adrift, the youthful rascals gleefully pelt the products of their labors with stones. The game ends when the target has been smashed to kindling, or, better yet, sunk to the accompaniment of children reveling in the joy of destruction.

Johnny and Milt's innovation was simple: a living target. Aquatic birds were out; they have an unsporting habit of flying out of range after the first volley. Adult swimmers and mariners are prone to retaliation. This left them but one obvious option.

Somehow or other, they got their hands on an 18-month old baby. After stripping the squirming infant of her clothes, they threw her into the river and jovially pelted her with rocks as the current bore her away. Unlike their previous floating targets, it wasn't necessary for them to score too many direct hits to sink the screaming infant. As she went down, they probably thought exultantly, This is excitement! The quick response of the police, summoned by horrified onlookers, was just an added thrill. However, it was too late for the baby. By the time her body was recovered from the river, she was dead.

In custody, Johnny and Milt corroborated each other's stories, save for one small detail. Each admitted to his part in the kidnapping, and they had no compunction about describing how they threw the stones. But when it came to throwing the baby in the river in the first place, it was a plain case of "He started it first!"

Milt was eligible to get away with it by virtue of his age; Massachusetts law at the time presumed that a child under the age of seven was unable to understand the nature of their act. No charges were brought against him, although he was held as a material witness. The picture for little Johnny was far grimmer. He was indicted for manslaughter. At his hearing, he put on a show worthy of his spiritual ancestor, Hannah Ocuish. As the judge, visibly

moved, read the indictment that threatened to incarcerate the little boy for the remainder of his childhood, Johnny, with all the carefree innocence of his years, amused himself by playing with a handful of pennies a kindly deputy sheriff had given him. As they led the little killer away from the courtroom, he playfully ran away from the sheriff, but was quickly caught. Security was poor as there wasn't a set of handcuffs in town small enough for his tiny wrists. When confronted with a jail cell and asked what it was for, he announced, "That's where they put bad men." Obviously, not the kind of place a small boy who was only playing expected to end up. At last word, the court shipped Johnny to a local psychiatric hospital for sanity observation.

Those barefoot boys and girls who congregate around every puddle whenever the mercury breaks 80 may just be trying to beat the heat in their own childish way. But for far too many gamins with naughty tendencies, the sight of placid waters leads to an irresistible impulse. The hottest action down at the old swimming hole doesn't necessarily involve Marco Polo or mudpies.

SHUT UP, MA

Holstein, Iowa 1930: 14-year old Lester Mohr had spent a pleasant afternoon drinking illicit beer. But he'd barely set foot in the house when his mother wrecked his buzz by getting on his case about some work he was supposed to do around the place. Lester responded to this abuse by clobbering her with a few bricks. He then dragged her into the house and shot her with a rifle and, for good measure, a shotgun. He later claimed it must have been robbers; he'd been working at a neighbor's spread all afternoon. He was convicted and sentenced to 50 years in prison.

NEWSBOYS PLAY ROUGH, Part 1

Detroit, 1931: Joe Przystas, 15, seemed to be a model boy. He was an honor student and breadwinner for his family, supporting his mother and two sisters on the proceeds of his paper route. He took his job seriously in the days when your territory was only as good as your left hook. But one day, he made the mistake of beating up an 11-year old boy in a newspaper-related dispute. The boy complained to a gang of fellow newsies, none older than 14, called "Floyd's Club". The club vowed vengeance. They grabbed a gun, went over to the Przystas household and shot and killed Joe as he shoveled coal. They later said they just wanted to "scare" him; they really were aiming at the shovel.

CHOO CHOO CRASH BANG!

Kids Who Wreck Trains

Every Christmas Day, living rooms across America provide the stage for a heartwarming Rockwellian drama. The presents have been opened. The room is a happily confused welter of loose ribbons, crumpled wrapping paper, and empty boxes, punctuated with all manner of shiny new toys. A radiantly cheerful fire crackles in the fireplace. The air is filled with the sounds of juvenile glee.

But one discordant note sounds in the midst of this merriment. For one boy, Christmas has not turned out to be all he hoped. The pile of bright and shiny presents before him lacks one crucial item. Bravely, he feigns satisfaction, little knowing he is but an unwitting player in a greater drama.

Then, as if by magic, Father produces one final present: a large, flat box. The mopey lad comes alive in a sudden burst of Christmas morning enthusiasm. His eyes glowing, he frenetically tears off the wrapping paper and all but destroys the box in his haste to open it even though he knows exactly what is inside. It's an HO-scale model train. His Christmas is now complete. The afternoon is spent in an idyllic father/son project of assembling the tracks. By dinnertime, Junior is adeptly running his own railroad--coupling and uncoupling trains, operating the switches, and skillfully guiding the train over the yards of track winding throughout the living room.

And, sure as death and taxes, before bedtime Junior stages his first model train wreck.

Fortunately for American railroads, most children are content staging head-on collisions between scale models of the Cannonball Express and the 20th Century Limited. But for a small, hard-core group, mayhem at 1/87 scale is only a pale imitation of the real thing. These baby-faced train wreckers prefer playing with real rolling stock.

Even the casual student of railroad history knows that these youngsters have fought their long-running war with a bitterness exceeding that of the legendary railroad strikes. Their antics have liberally strewn the tracks of America with shattered railcars and mangled bodies, with casualties heavy on both sides. As one veteran railroad detective put it, "Ask any railroad police officer what his principal worry is and there is little doubt that his reply will be juveniles." Give American youth a free hand and rail traffic would grind to a thundering halt.

Even fragmentary statistics--and railroads prefer to keep them as fragmentary as possible--tell a grim story. Reportedly over 75% of all cases of track tampering, signal resetting, and barricade building are traced to children. The plight of the Long Island Railroad in 1931 offered a rare glimpse of the railyard as playground. Out of desperation, officials mounted a publicity campaign aimed at school principals and clergymen to help curb "mischievous and malicious practices" of local kids on railroad property. The railroad had already arrested 326 boys in the first four months of the year. The crimes read like the laundry list of dedicated saboteurs. Equipment was stolen or vandalized. Rocks were thrown and guns fired at passing trains. Some enterprising lads put stolen lanterns to use, waving locomotives to unscheduled, potentially lethal stops. But the hands down favorite was piling debris on the tracks. In those few short months, track workers and railroad police removed iron rods and tire rims from the electric third rail, and boards, auto parts, rocks, and at least one small building from the tracks proper. And this was no Depression-era

aberration. In the '40s and '50s, around 80 kids under 14 were killed, and a good many more maimed, each year on railroad property. It's a safe bet they weren't all taking a shortcut to the library.

Probably the most widespread, yet least reported phase of this long running conflict can be summed up in a simple phrase: trains make great moving targets. At times, it seems as if passenger trains could proceed through certain areas only if accompanied by a shower of stones, punctuated with the occasional bullet.

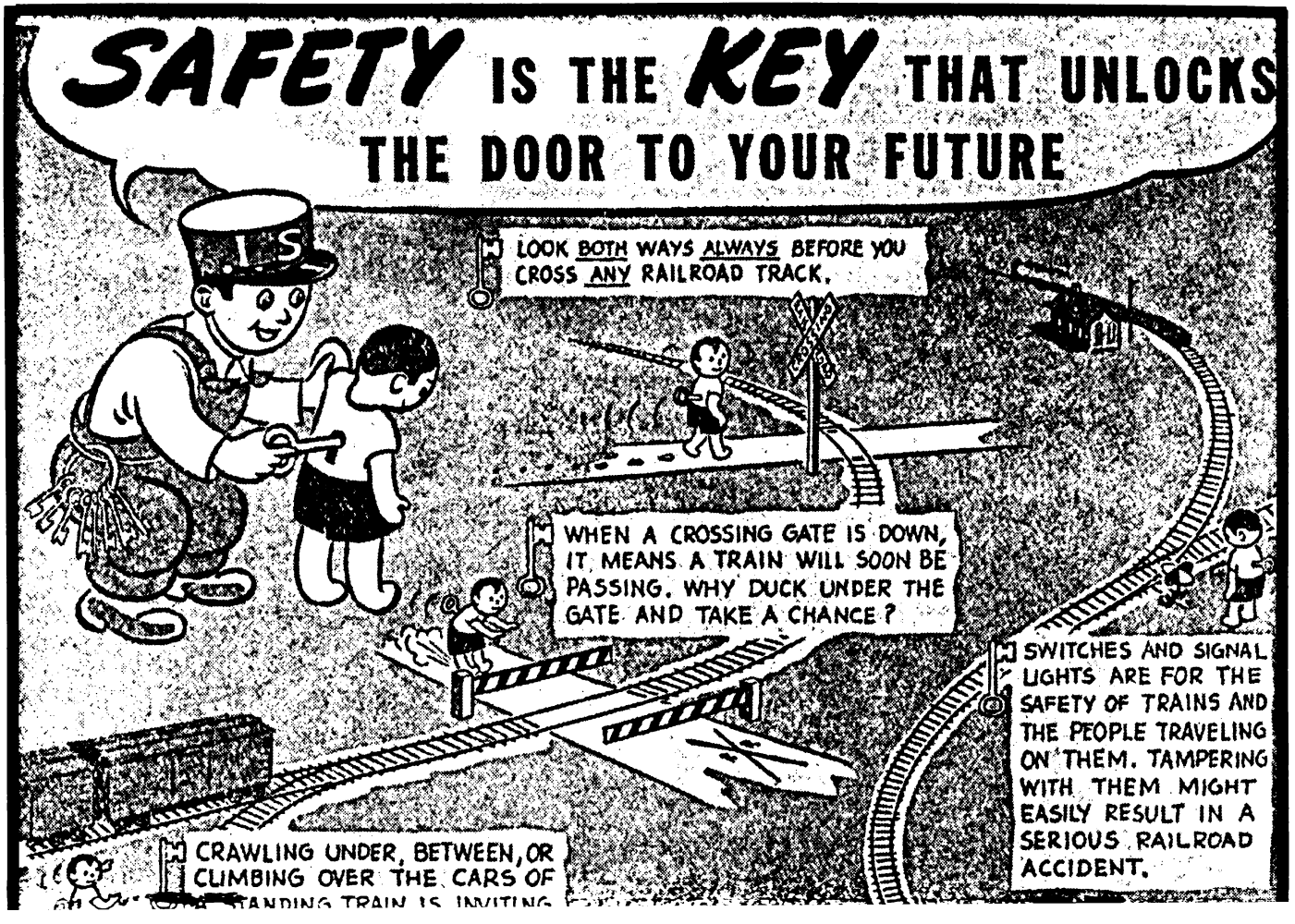
Newspaper accounts of this brand of juvenile deviltry are few and far between; railroads like to keep the incidents quiet to prevent a rash of copycat attacks. Typical incidents include one in the Bronx in 1934, when a trio of boys, none older than 10, enlivened the evening commute by pegging some thirteen trains within an hour, injuring 23 passengers. And in 1947 in nearby Queens, five more young lads were apprehended following a similar spate of broken windows and injured passengers. They steadfastly maintained their innocence, only copping to innocently throwing rocks at wheels, tracks, and overhead wires. It was the forever unapprehended "other boys" who had done the real damage. It's not unusual for lines caught in a "stoning" fad to report a thousand broken windows and a hundred injuries in a year. And shootings, while rare, are far more lethal. In August, 1953, a 13-year old boy taking a few pot shots with his friends down by the tracks managed to kill a brakeman.

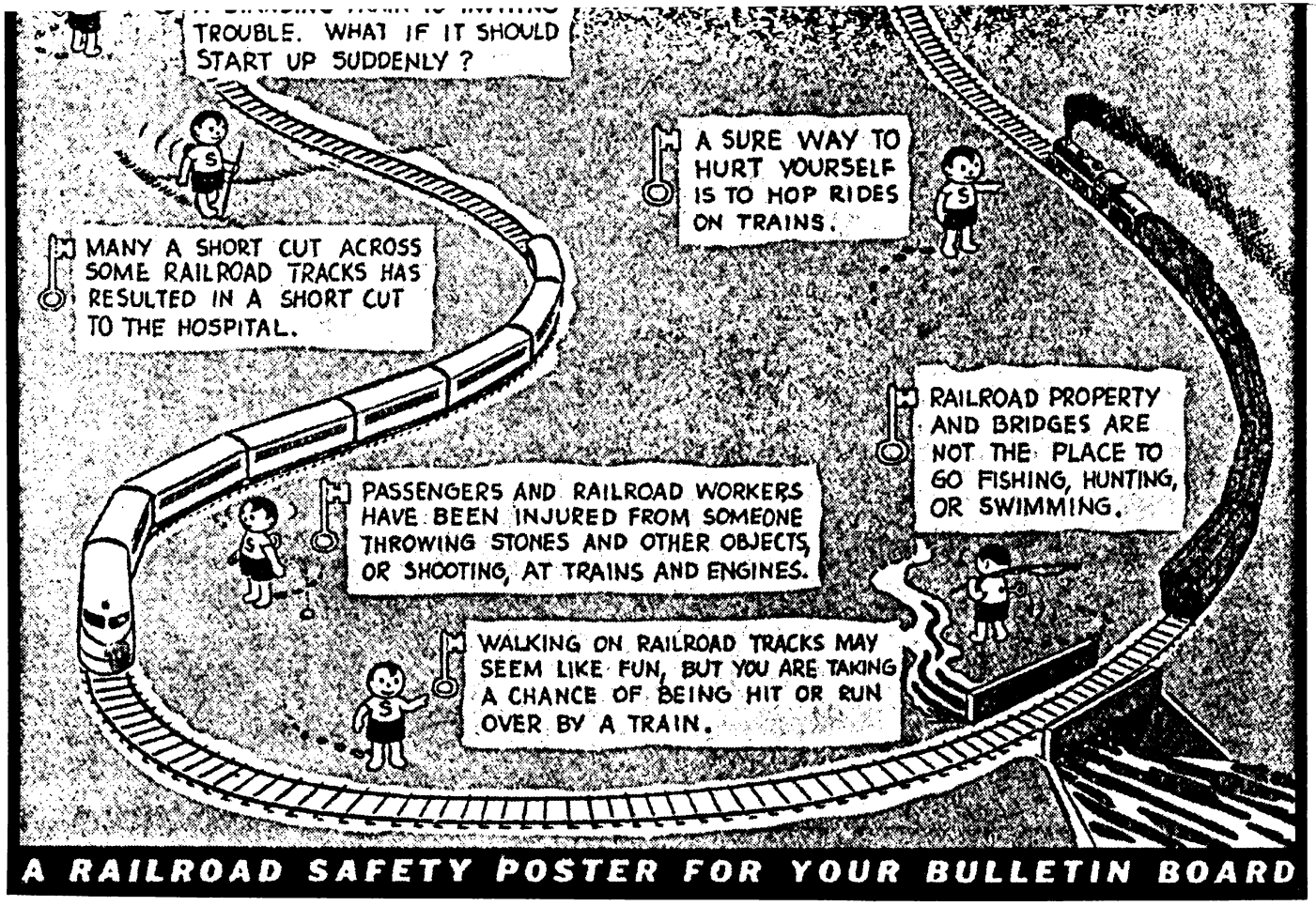
But stoning and shooting at trains are just small potatoes, kid stuff if you will. They only offer momentary thrills. Real kicks, as any enterprising young vandal can tell you, come from real train wrecks. Imagine 20 tons of locomotive suddenly torn as if by magic from the rails. Behind it, the cars scatter about like ninepins. Wood, metal, and glass are smashed together in an entangled mass. The roar of the crash gives way to the ominous hiss of steam. And that boom--could it be a boiler

explosion? Any child witnessing this horrific spectacle can have but one reaction. Cool!

Children have not been implicated in any of the major malicious derailments of this century. This has not been for a lack of effort on their part. It takes technical knowledge, hard work, and careful choice of location to cause a major derailment. Time and time again, children have demonstrated no shortage of these first two qualities of the successful train wrecker. But, impulsive little devils that they are, they just can't be bothered with trudging 50 miles out into the middle of the desert to kill a few dozen more people. Much like big brother's gang's preference for local rumbles, they prefer the convenience of indulging in their hobby close to home. They may have never caused a major wreck, but the little fellows have been behind a startling amount of trackside mayhem and carnage.

One is struck by the effort these young vandals put in. It's difficult to decide what shocks their parents more: the fact that the apple of their eye has callously destroyed thousands of dollars of property, possibly maiming or killing a few innocent people in the process, or the fact that their son, who reacts to a request to take out the garbage as


SAFETY IS THE KEY THAT UNLOCKS THE DOOR TO YOUR FUTURE
I S
LOOK BOTH WAYS ALWAYS BEFORE YOU CROSS ANY RAILROAD TRACK.
RAILROAD CROSSING
WHEN A CROSSING GATE IS DOWN, IT MEANS A TRAIN WILL SOON BE PASSING. WHY DUCK UNDER THE GATE AND TAKE A CHANCE?
SWITCHES AND SIGNAL LIGHTS ARE FOR THE SAFETY OF TRAINS AND THE PEOPLE TRAVELING ON THEM. TAMPERING WITH THEM MIGHT EASILY RESULT IN A SERIOUS RAILROAD ACCIDENT.
CRAWLING UNDER, BETWEEN, OR CLIMBING OVER THE CARS OF


TROUBLE. WHAT IF IT SHOULD START UP SUDDENLY ?
A SURE WAY TO HURT YOURSELF IS TO HOP RIDES ON TRAINS.
MANY A SHORT CUT ACROSS SOME RAILROAD TRACKS HAS RESULTED IN A SHORT CUT TO THE HOSPITAL.
RAILROAD PROPERTY AND BRIDGES ARE NOT THE PLACE TO GO FISHING, HUNTING, OR SWIMMING.
PASSENGERS AND RAILROAD WORKERS HAVE BEEN INJURED FROM SOMEONE THROWING STONES AND OTHER OBJECTS, OR SHOOTING, AT TRAINS AND ENGINES.
WALKING ON RAILROAD TRACKS MAY SEEM LIKE FUN, BUT YOU ARE TAKING A CHANCE OF BEING HIT OR RUN OVER BY A TRAIN.
A RAILROAD SAFETY POSTER FOR YOUR BULLETIN BOARD

if it was banishment to a Nazi labor camp, has just voluntarily spent hours hauling hundred of pounds of debris uphill to pile on the tracks.

Perhaps the most elegant and least labor intensive means of wreaking havoc along the rails is simply to reset the switches. Imagine the look on the engineer's face when his train, traveling at full speed, takes a sudden, unexpected detour onto a siding. That's a Kodak moment in anyone's book.

Switch tampering is easier said than done. Railroads routinely keep them locked and only distribute the keys to authorized personnel. Most switches also trigger a signal when they are thrown to warn an alert engineer and remove the essential element of surprise. But the system isn't foolproof and children are no fools. When all goes well, the results are truly sublime. The express train hurtles along the main track. Suddenly, it's as if a giant hand brutally pushes it aside. Within seconds, locomotives and cars are flying akimbo, possibly colliding with other trains on adjacent track. It ends with rolling stock turned to piles of mangled wreckage--all from the clever manipulation of a few levers.

Kids of all ages have gotten into the act. Police investigating a minor yard derailment in Washington in the '50s were surprised when the only person they could place near the mis-set switch (which had been accidentally left unlocked) was a 4-year old boy. But they were stunned when said preschooler demonstrated just how he'd thrown the switch to cause the wreck.

But switch setting is generally the work of older, wiser naughty children. One of the most memorable wrecks of this type was the work of William G., the son of a sharecropper. At 15, he was perhaps a trifle old for "naughty child" status, but he was still in 7th grade.

One day in 1950 outside Holland, Missouri, the barefoot lad carefully set the stage to reenact a scene he'd seen in a recent movie about the Dalton Gang. Armed with a hacksaw, he sawed through a switch lock and reset the switch for the siding* near his father's farm. To avoid any last minute braking by the engineer, he also smashed the signal light so the switch looked like it was still set for the main track. As the next train wasn't due over the line until early the next morning, he walked back home and went to bed. He later claimed he never intended to derail the train. He just wanted it to veer onto the siding and veer back onto the main line as some kind of a big joke. Ha! Ha!

William was safely in bed when the *Memphian*, the crack Memphis-to-St. Louis express, thundered by at 2:30 AM. It took the switch at 57 mph. The results were no joke. The locomotive and the tender were torn from the tracks, tumbling onto their sides and dragging two baggage cars with them. Two passenger cars also derailed. The locomotive was so badly smashed it took rescuers four hours to free the body of the engineer, the wreck's lone fatality. The fireman had been seriously scalded by the steam but was thrown clear and survived. 12 passengers also suffered minor injuries. It didn't take too long to catch William. This had been a long term project of his. Other farmers spotted him the previous week, trying to break open the lock without a hacksaw.

A less elegant, more labor intensive and far more popular way to keep trains from running on time is simply to pile junk on the tracks; the more, the better. Rare is the train track without a plentiful supply of stones, rocks, spike, and other industrial debris conveniently located nearby. A little sweat, some elbow grease, and a bit of luck and any boy can be his own train wrecker.

This was how one of the most dramatic and successful examples of juvenile train wrecking happened. The scene was the small town of Walton, Indiana; the year,

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* For all you non-buffs, sidings are short tracks alongside the main line that function as parking places or turnouts. Slower trains pull onto them to let faster trains pass. Needless to say, this is something that is not done at full speed.

Pittsburgh, PA, 1926: Ernest B., 11, and his 7-year old sister confessed to derailing an express train near their house. Their motives? They wanted to "see the train jump the tracks."

Newark, NJ, 1930: After a summer's worth of experimentation with stones and boards, three 11-year old boys and a 13-year old wired spikes to the rails on the edge of a 40-foot high trestle and hid in the bushes to watch the fun. As an added precaution, they drew salt pork across their trail to confuse any bloodhounds. These kids were serious.

To their chagrin, a slow-moving switch engine hit the spikes first. The engineer managed to remove the spikes and back onto a siding before their target, the 2:22 express came along and hurtled safely across the trestle. As happens so often, they were a little too loose-lipped around school about their efforts "to make a wreck" and word reached the police.

Morganton, NC, 1931 *(4 injured)*: A 6-year old boy put a large rock on the tracks, derailing a Southern Railway passenger train. None of the passengers were injured seriously. For punishment, he was inexplicably sentenced to have his tonsils removed. The *New York Times* noted "Presumably the judge is a believer in the character-restoring effects of necessary surgery."

Bayonne, NJ, 1942 *($50,000 damages)*: A Reading Railroad express hit a pile of bricks at 60 mph. The locomotive and two baggage cars derailed and a mile of track was destroyed. Police caught two boys, ages 11 and 12, throwing rocks a buildings nearby who copped to putting "a couple of bricks" on the tracks.

Highland, NY 1943 *($123,000 damages)*: Two boys, aged 14 and 9, put a large rock on the tracks near a switch, derailing a freight train. And they picked a train that could cause a lot of damage. 24 tank cars carrying gasoline, oil, and other flammable liquids caught fire. The flames destroyed not only the train, but three nearby houses.

Milltown, WI 1948: *(21 injured)*: Three 11-year old boys piled stones on the tracks outside town, derailing a passenger train.

Bloomfield, IN 1951 *(three killed)*: While "just playing", a 10-year old boy jammed a 10-inch bolt into a switch. The obstacle derailed a locomotive; three trainmen, trapped in the cab, were scalded to death by steam from the ruptured boiler.

Greer, SC, 1955 *(two killed)*: a group of boys aged 12–14, broke open a switch and reset it for a dead-end siding. A freight train came along, crashed through the stops at the end of the siding and fell 15 feet down an embankment. A tank car landed on top of the engine, crushing the cab and killing both members of the crew.

Pompton Plains, NJ 1960 *(two killed)*: A 12-year old boy, with the help of a 7-year old playmate, broke open a switch with a baseball bat and reset it for the siding. They wrecked the next freight, killing two crew members.

1947. One day after school, Jack S., 12, and his 11-year old pal Lysle G. amused themselves by riding their bikes around the village. By dusk, a light snow began to fall. The boys were bored; one can only do so much riding around a village with a population of barely 700. When Jack said, "Let's go over and wreck a train," his suggestion fell on receptive ears.

The lads rode over the tracks. They started by putting a plank on the tracks. They stepped back to admire their

handiwork. It didn't look like much. So they added a few steel fence posts. Better, but still not good enough. Nearby was a roll of wire fencing weighing almost 200 pounds. They laboriously dragged it 20 feet uphill to add to their rapidly growing barrier. After heaving it on top of the plank and posts, they stepped back with a sigh of satisfaction. Now, that was a good, substantial barrier. They'd like to see a train get by that one.

But slowly, reality set in. They realized that they'd just piled several hundred pounds of junk on the tracks. And as soon as a train hit all that stuff, they'd be in a whole lot of trouble. So they reacted the way any naughty child does when he or she loses their nerve: they went home.

That is how the young train wreckers missed the biggest show ever to play Walton. An hour later, a passenger train hit the barrier. The train stayed on the tracks--at first. But the wire was hopelessly ensnared in the locomotive's front wheels. It pushed the roll of wire along until the wire snagged a switch in the center of town. This jerked the front of the locomotive from the rails, sending it careening along the track bed and tearing up 2000 feet of track before the rear wheels finally left the rails. The engine, now free of the tracks, spun around and fell over. It dragged six other cars with it. They crashed into a grain elevator and freight cars on nearby sidings. When the wreckage was finally cleared, the toll stood at four dead (the fireman and three passengers) and 23 passengers injured.

It didn't take the police very long to crack this one. The following week, they hauled Jack in for a few burglaries pulled the weekend before the train wreck. But they had a pretty good idea that his naughtiness went beyond a few B&Es. Nonchalantly, in the middle of a bunch of questions about the break-ins they asked him, "Say, did you put the wire on the track before or after dark?" Jack blundered straight into the trap. He innocently answered, "Why, it was after dark." The cat now out of the bag, he quickly told the whole story. Lysle quickly joined his pal into the clink.

At first, some people doubted that such little fellows could drag all that junk up onto the tracks. So, for the benefit of the police and the papers, the boys staged a reenactment. As the cops filmed and the scribes scribbled, they demonstrated exactly how, grunting and heaving, they'd hauled that heavy roll of fencing up onto the tracks.

ONE ROUND THE KIDS LOST

Chicago, 1927: Michael R., 14, and two of his 12-year old friends decided go one better over throwing rocks at train. They broke into Soldier Field one evening and stole eight sticks of dynamite from the stores of a military revue then wowing the Windy City. From a nearby rail overpass, they whiled away the night by trying to drop chunks of TNT into the smokestacks of the Illinois Central locomotives passing below. The destructive potential of this pastime were tremendous; with luck, they could rupture a boiler. The explosion of a locomotive boiler is a spectacle guaranteed to send even the most jaded into paroxysms of ecstasy. But neither the trio's patience nor aim were up to the task. Police later recovered 16 pieces of dynamite from the right-of-way where they'd fallen after bouncing harmlessly from the trains

By now, the boys were desperate. Recessing to a remote corner of the railyard, they built a small fire. As soon as it was burning heartily, they tossed in the rest of their dynamite and sat back to wait for detonation. Nothing happened. They waited some more. Still nothing. Once again, they'd had it. Perhaps they were ready to call it an evening, or maybe they had still more plans for their explosives. Michael reached in to pull the dynamite from the fire. On three everyone: "Michael, don't do it!" But of course, he did at precisely the wrong instant. The resulting explosion tore off his hand.

To the amazement of spectators, it only took them 15 minutes. And they had just as much fun the second time around. As one reporter described the scene, "At times, they smiled and appeared to be enjoying the 'play', apparently not fully away of its tragic implications."

Sadly, the halcyon days of juvenile train wrecking have passed. The roar of locomotives has been replaced by the thunder of trucks in the nation's transit industry. Tracks have been abandoned and train traffic reduced, even as a network of heavily-traveled freeways has spread across the land. The bulk of thrill seeking youngsters have been carefully removed from urban cores to remote suburbs zealously zoned to keep railroads-out. For many deprived children today, the Christmas Night model train wrecks will be as close as they will ever come to the real thing. The decline of American railroads has had one fringe benefit for workers and passengers: no longer are the shiny rails the tracks of temptation.

DRIVE-BY SHOOTING, '40S STYLE

Brooklyn, 1948: One spring evening in the Fort Hamilton section, the phone rang in the home of Miss Margaret Jokiel, a math teacher at the local high school. A squeaky voice on the other end of the line warned that Miss Jokiel had better give all the kids in her algebra class passing grades on the morrow's test. Or else.

It was no idle threat. Barely a half hour later, at 9:30 PM, a car drove by the Jokiel house, its headlights ominously obscured by handkerchiefs. Rifles poked out its darkened windows and began spurting fire. Police later counted 23 bullet holes in the Jokiel house and neighboring homes. However, Miss Jokiel's mother, the only person in the house, was hysterical, but unharmed.

Police accompanied Miss Jokiel to her classes the next day where they quickly got to the bottom of things. A 16-year old ringer was spotted taking the test in the middle of a classroom full of 14-year olds. It was quickly determined he was proxying for the shooting's mastermind.

The 14-year old ringleader had good reason to worry about his algebra grade; he'd flunked with a perfect 0 on the first day of the exam. Miss Jokiel described him as "...not a good boy. He cut classes. He was a poor student and the type that would not work." He'd planned and carried out the drive-by shooting to prevent a repeat performance on the second half of the exam. He'd recruited a few friends and, using a stolen car and guns lifted from a Coney Island shooting gallery, tried to give Miss Jokiel a good scare.

It was all for naught. Not only did his plan unravel, sending him and four pals to reform school, he flunked the test anyway. His proxy only scored 43%, well below the minimum passing mark of 65%.

...the act of destruction is often very pleasurable as an end in itself... It is easy to overlook this obvious but critical aspect of vandalism: that there is pleasure in destruction.

--V.L. Allen, "The Hedonistic Component of Vandalism"

THE NAUGHTIEST BOY

Jesse Harding Pomeroy, Boy Fiend Extraordinaire

Jesse Harding Pomeroy has few, if any, rivals for the title of naughtiest boy in American history. Other lads have wrecked trains, burned down buildings, and done away with their little friends in all sorts of cruel and imaginative ways. But Jesse makes them all look like dirty-faced angels "hooking" apples from the orchard of a cranky farmer. Jesse was not an occasional miscreant. He was no Saturday night saboteur or casual killer of playmates. Jesse's crimes were vicious, unrepentant, and ongoing. He enjoyed every minute of 'em, freely violating the laws of God and man, all the while wearing a wickedly ecstatic grin on his face. Many bad children outgrow their violent delinquency to become upstanding citizens, or at least sensible, respectable criminals. Not Jesse. He was well on his way to becoming the next John Wayne Gacy. When they finally sent him away to prison for good at the ripe old age of 14, a mere life sentence wasn't enough. The good people of Massachusetts were so incensed with Jesse's crimes, they made him stand in the corner all by himself for the first 40 or so years.

It's not hard to understand what made them so mad. Jesse was a very, very naughty boy--the Jack the Ripper of the junior high school set. He specialized in torturing, and sometimes killing, young boys between the ages of 4 and 8 using an elaborate modus operandi involving ropes, knives, pins, and sticks. He killed two children and assaulted at least several, perhaps many more in a criminal career that scarcely spanned a year. At times, he was attacking a boy a week. Nor was he simply acting on some adolescent peevishness or making an unconscious, pre-New Age "cry for help". Jesse knew exactly what he was doing and why. He loved it! Although contemporary accounts make no mention of any overtly sexual acts, every one of Jesse's attacks was marked by strong overtones of sexual sadism. His surviving victims invariably remembered Jesse smiling, even laughing as he beat and stabbed them.

All this, and it was only 1872. Grant was President, Victoria Queen. The Transcontinental Railroad had just been completed. Jules Verne was finishing *Around the World in 80 Days*. George Custer was riding strong, still several years from his encounter with Sitting Bull. Even Jack the Ripper was presumably still an undergraduate, 14 years before his ascension into myth. And there was Jesse, short pants, high collar and all, terrifying Boston with crimes lurid enough to keep a regiment of modern day true crime hacks busy churning out cheesy red-on-black paperbacks with titles like *The Tot Torturer* or *The Boston Boy Killer.*

For all the horror of his crimes, Jesse had a surprisingly normal background. He was born in Charlestown, Massachusetts on November 29, 1859. His mother was a seamstress, his father a laborer in the nearby Boston Naval Yard. His father later quit this job to enter the butcher business. Years later, after Jesse's arrest, Sunday supplement theorists found great significance in this career change. Mrs. Pomeroy, however, shot down this theory. Her husband's duties primarily involved toting cattle carcasses around the market. Jesse had not spent his formative years hanging around the slaughterhouses helping Dad. Jesse's flair for butchery needed no such external inspiration.

Jesse had been a sickly baby. He developed a serious "humor"* shortly after birth. He recovered from this apparently serious affliction (whatever it was) by the time he was seven months old, but it left him scrawny and frail. Either the humor or

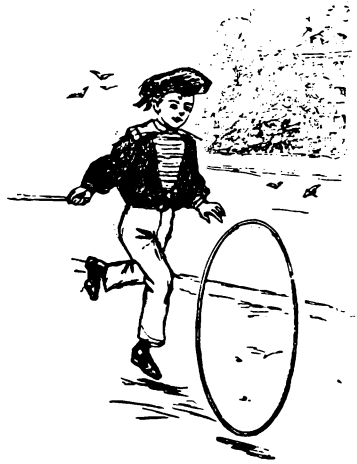
* I haven't the faintest idea what this is either.

another infant illness scarred the cornea of his right eye, leaving a noticeable mark. But he rallied back from these early health problems. Save for the spot on his eye, he looked like any other chubby toddler, romping around the flat and playing with his older brother Charles by his third birthday*.

However, all parties (save his mother) agree that there was something noticeably strange about Jesse from an early age. He wasn't just another nice normal little boy. It's not that he was especially bad. That came later, in spades. Unlike many of his brethren in the multiple murderer fraternity, his younger years weren't a confusion of habitual truancy, strangled puppies, and playground brawls. The only dark portent from his childhood is a neighbor's possibly apocryphal story about 5-year old Jesse stabbing a cat and tossing it into the river.

No, the odd thing about Jesse was what he wasn't doing. He seldom played, or even spoke, with the other children in the neighborhood. Even as rambunctious games of "old cat" and "kick the can" raged up and down the street, Jesse quietly remained aloof. He preferred to spend his time reading dime novels, especially those published by the Beadle and Munro publishing houses. His favorite series was based on the grisly exploits of Simon Girty, a real-life renegade white man who led the Shawnee Indians on many a frontier settler massacre in the 1780s. His subsequent activities showed undeniable touches lifted from cowboy & indian dime novels. But the feeling around the neighborhood went deeper than the traditional prejudice against bookish youngsters. Jesse wasn't just anti-social; he was anti-social in a weird way. There was something about the boy that was "not quite right."

Nor was school the environment where



he flourished. He was a good, but not necessarily outstanding, student. One teacher described him as "peculiar, intractable, not bad, but difficult to understand." When he gave an answer, that was *the* answer. Jesse did not take kindly to any corrections. Nor was he a shame-faced recipient of punishment. He consistently displayed great bitterness and a stinging sense of injustice towards any disciplinary measures, no manner how minor or well deserved.

It's a time-honored tradition for relatives of any weird criminal to finger some medical mishap as the turning point that sent the family lunatic to his or her gory rendezvous with destiny. For Jesse, this wasn't the traditional bump on the head but a serious case of pneumonia he caught in October of 1871. During his illness, he went through many crises and was frequently delirious. Even after he recovered, his mother (whose irrational support and defense of her problem child was almost pathological) recalled that he remained "not so well".

Jesse celebrated his 12th birthday shortly after his recovery. A few weeks after he passed this milestone, it suddenly became very unpleasant to be a little boy in the Charlestown/Chelsea area. The first

* Some second hand sources claim Jesse had a harelip. However, neither contemporary newspaper stories, accounts of people who actually knew Jesse, nor descriptions of his photo mention this can't-miss detail. Chalk it up to bad hack crime writing.

SOME VICTIMS OF THE BOY FIEND, Part I

Chelsea/Charlestown/Somerville area:

Tracy Hayden, 7: "He asked me if I wanted to go to Powder House Hill to see the soldiers. There he stripped me and put a handkerchief in my mouth. He licked me with a stick in a backhouse, whipped me with a piece of hard stick and said he would cut my penis off. He tied my feet and hands and tied me to a beam. He whipped me 4 or 5 times. Then he dressed me and took me home." The newspapers reported Tracy had several teeth knocked out and "other, more serious injuries inflicted."

Robert Maier, 8: "He asked me if I wanted to see Barnum's Circus." The first hint that elephants and clowns weren't on the afternoon's agenda was when the older boy tried to push him in a pond. Then, he forced Robert to strip, shoved a milk cork in his mouth and tied him to a beam. "He then took a switch and hit me. He was laughing at me when he whipped me. He told me to swear and made me say naughty words like 'kiss my ass' and 'shit'. He jumped around me and laughed. He then told me to put my clothes on and dragged me home."

Johnny Balch, 7: He was looking in a toy shop window when an older boy offered him 25¢ to carry a bundle to Powder House Hill. Once up there, the fiend "...took me into a water-closet, locked the door, undressed me and tied my hands over my head to a beam with a rope like a clothesline. He beat me as hard as he could and stamped on me. He tied my feet, put a handkerchief in my mouth, and asked me if I knew about the Hayden boy." Then, out of a perverse sense of kindness, the older boy washed the battered and bleeding child in a salt water creek.

attack came around Christmastime. In Chelsea, a Boston suburb across the river from the Pomeroy home, an older lad enticed a small boy up to a remote area on Powder House Hill. As soon as they were alone, he forced the younger child to take off all his clothes and tied him to a beam. He then took a rope and, brandishing it like a whip, flogged the child into unconsciousness.

In the months that followed, at least three more young boys in the Chelsea/Somerville/Charlestown area, most 7 or 8 years old, suffered similar, yet increasingly brutal and perverse assaults at the hands of the mysterious "boy fiend". Lured to remote areas (generally Powder House Hill in Chelsea) he would force them to strip and bound to a post or beam. He would beat them with a stick or whip them with a rope and force them to say naughty things like "kiss my ass". Often, he cut them with a knife and shoved pins into their bodies. He paid special attention to the area around their eyes (mutilating their faces for life) as well as their genitals and thighs. Every one of the victims reported how much their brutal assailant enjoyed these torture sessions, jumping about with a smile on a his face and laughter on his lips as his little victims writhed in pain.

Needless to say, the public objected loudly to these hi-jinx. The police were under considerable pressure to capture the perpetrator of these outrages. So far, the fiend's victims had all survived, but it seemed only a matter of time before he went too far. The City of Chelsea offered a $1000 reward, and the police launched an aggressive investigation. Many a neighborhood bully found himself under suspicion. At least 17 youthful hooligans were arrested and paraded in front of the little victims. Each time, the battered little boys shook their heads. No, that wasn't the boy torturer.

SOME VICTIMS OF THE BOY FIEND, Part II

South Boston, August 1872 -- September 1872:

Harry Austin, 8: Harry was lured under a railroad bridge by the promise of money for a trivial errand. Quickly, he was forced to take all his clothes off and bound with cord. The fiend cut him with a pocket knife. By the time he was finished, Harry was bleeding from several stab wounds under his shoulder blades and in his armpit and his penis was "nearly half cut off."

George Pratt, 7: Jesse offered him 10¢ to carry a bundle of newspapers to a streetcar station. Oddly enough, George declined but nonetheless accompanied the older boy to the beach. Down by the shore, they boarded a yacht. There things turned ugly. "He said I had told three lies and he was going to lick me three times. He told me to strip. I did not want to. He told me I must, so I did. He took a strap he had around him and hit me on the stomach and head. He paused between blows. He hit me 50 times, stuck a pin in my face, meddled with my private parts and stuck a pin in them. He put his hands over my mouth, threw me down on the floor and bit me on the cheek and back, and right in the rump. He smiled while he was doing it. Then he told me to dress and go to sleep and he jumped out of the boat and disappeared."

Joseph Kennedy*, 7: Joseph was innocently playing in the sand when a bigger boy offered him a nickel to carry a letter. Trustingly, Joseph took the older boy's hand and let himself be led to a boathouse. "He beat my head against the boathouse... He said if I hollered he would kill me. He stabbed me and scratched my hand with a horseshoe. Then he took me out onto the railroad. He had a big knife. He cut me in the face, three times on each side. Then he cut me here, made me say my prayers and naughty words, and said he was going to kill me, that I never would see my father and mother any more."

The attacks stopped as quickly as they began in late July. But by early August, another series of sadistic assaults on young boys started in South Boston. The *modus operandi* matched the Chelsea attacks. Victims were lured to lonely areas, generally by the shore or the train tracks, forced to strip, bound, beaten, and cut. By mid-September, at least three more boys had been assaulted.

Meanwhile, things had not been going well in the Pomeroy household. Jesse's father packed up and left, leaving Mrs. Pomeroy the daunting prospect of providing for their two boys. But she was a resourceful woman. She rented a small storefront in South Boston at 327 Broadway and made it into a dressmaking shop. And in August of 1872, the small family moved into a flat across the street at number 312. It wasn't easy; both boys had to help out in the shop. Charles also took a job selling papers. Oddly enough, their move coincided almost exactly with the end of the Chelsea attacks and the beginning of the South Boston outrages.

Meanwhile, the boy torturer claimed his final victim on September 17. Using his undeniable gift for gab, he enticed a boy, apparently 5-year old Robert Gould, away from his home to a lonely spot near the railroad tracks. (No one can agree on the exact order of Jesse's victims.) He forced the terrified child to strip, tied him to a telegraph pole, cut him about the face and whipped him.

The boy torturer had assaulted his last victim--at least for now According to

* This is not the same Joseph Kennedy who grew up to be ambassador to Great Britain and the father of two assassination victims. Sorry.

Jesse's *Autobiography*[*] written a few years later, Jesse was innocently strolling by the police station a few days after the Gould attack when a cop walked out, accompanied by victim Joseph Kennedy. The cop beckoned Jesse to step inside. Jesse later wrote "I told him I had done nothing, and commenced to cry. I was so frightened."

At the station house, a few of the South Boston victims identified Jesse as the boy who'd attacked him. Jesse later begged to differ:

> ...those boys that had been so maltreated by another came and said that I was the boy that did it to them and the only way they identified me was because I had a spot on the right eye.

The police also suspected Jesse may have had a hand in the earlier attacks in the northern suburbs. They brought Johnny Balch down from Chelsea. Overjoyed, the small, now-scarred boy excitedly jumped about and exclaimed, "That's the boy who cut me."

When Jesse was indicted the following week, six of his erstwhile victims signed the complaint. At his trial, his mother testified that Jesse was dutiful, obedient, and an all-around "good son". He never had problems with school and, contrary to that one neighbor's story, was never cruel to animals. The whole thing came as a complete surprise to her. As for Jesse, he admitted all the charges, for now. (He would be singing quite a different tune in the not-so-distant future.) Considerable sympathy was expressed towards Mrs. Pomeroy; even Jesse, whose lack of emotion was interpreted as an inability to comprehend the seriousness of his situation, cried after she testified. Nonetheless, he was sentenced to confinement for the duration of his "minority" at the Westboro House of Reformation. The judge had chosen this institution after much deliberation. He figured it was the place where Jesse would be least likely to contaminate other inmates.

Life in South Boston returned to normal. Once again, small children darted recklessly along the sidewalks and through the alleys, no longer in fear of the lurking boy fiend. And Jesse went about becoming the star inmate of the reformatory. His behavior was impeccable He applied himself to his studies, standing near the top of his class yet avoiding any difficulties with his fellow inmates. The administration granted him increasing privileges, eventually giving him free run of the entire school. And not once did he abuse his newly won freedoms. The "boy fiend" had to all outward appearances reformed.

Thus, when his mother petitioned for his parole the following year, her request fell on receptive ears. Jesse was a model prisoner. A stable, healthy home awaited him, with plenty of work to distract him from the odd impure thought. Mrs. Pomeroy needed Jesse to help out in the store, and his brother could use an extra pair of hands on the paper route. The only concern was that Jesse might have some problems with the people in the neighborhood, especially from boys his own age. The local police put in their 2¢ here. They assured the reformatory that they'd be happy to keep an eye on things to make sure Jesse didn't become a victim himself. It would be no problem.

Thus, about 14 months after his arrest, Jesse, now 14, was quietly paroled to his mother's custody in early February, 1874. Just like the police promised, there were no problems. There was no outcry in the neighborhood or in the papers. Like a repentant sinner returning to the flock after going briefly astray, Jesse quietly went about his work, a testament to juvenile reform. He was ever the dutiful son.

The quiet life of the neighborhood was disrupted briefly six weeks later. On March 18, 9-year old Katie Curran disappeared while running an errand on the 300 block of

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[*] It's always a good idea to take autobiographies of criminals with a grain of salt. It's not inconceivable for them to be fabrications by some hungry journalist. And even if they issue from the killer's pen, they tend to present a unique take on reality that often belongs in the fiction section.

Broadway. The cops searched the entire neighborhood, including the Pomeroy store, looking for evidence of foul play. Fortunately for Jesse, a child told the police they'd seen a girl meeting Katie's description climbing into a buggy with a strange man. The popular verdict was that she had been abducted. Jesse himself would opine the snatch had been arranged by her father in order to ship her off to a convent. Jesse was apparently never a serious suspect. Everyone knew he preferred little boys.

A little more than a month later on April 22, two boys playing in the marshes jutting out into Dorchester Bay between South Boston and Savin Hill made a grisly and gruesome discovery. They found the still warm body of a preschool boy lying on his back in the mud. He had obviously been the victim of a frenzied assault. His pants were down around his ankles. Blood still oozed from his eyes and numerous knife wounds in his chest and groin. Running, the boys told two nearby hunters of their discovery who then summoned the police.

It was a sight. The body was identified as Horace Millen, 4, of South Boston. His throat had been cut ear-to-ear, almost decapitating him. His body bore numerous stab wounds in his right eye, chest, and hands: all told, some 33 punctures. And, to leave no doubt as to motivation, the killer had all but castrated the boy. The testicles tumbled out onto the mud as the body was removed.

Police found footprints nearby indicating an older boy had accompanied Horace to the scene of the crime. The footprints led back to a wharf a half mile away. Witnesses there remembered a young teenager that morning walking around with Horace, "asking what the men are shooting on the marsh." He then jumped from the wharf, helping his small companion down with "a swing of his arms." Horace took the older boy's hand and, under what pretext will never be known, happily walked across the marshes to his fate.

This time, the police had a pretty good idea what kind of boy would do such a nasty thing. First instincts would prove correct. When they arrested Jesse at his home, they found blood on his knife, another spot of blood on his undershirt, and marsh mud on his boots. Reportedly, when the police confronted him with Horace's mutilated corpse asked him if he'd done it, he laconically replied, "I suppose so." Jesse explained he'd cleaned most of the blood on his knife by sticking it in the mud. His only request was that the police not tell his mother of his latest crime.

Whether Jesse actually confessed just then is open to question. Certainly, by the time of the inquest a few days later, he was singing a tune he'd harmonize with for the rest of his life: he was innocent. With utmost sincerity, he gave court a minute-by-minute account of how he rode the streetcars out to Boston Common for some good old-fashioned adolescent hanging-out the day of Horace's murder. He hadn't been anywhere near the marsh. The bloody knife? Why, that was the exact knife he'd lost earlier!

For some reason, there was a long delay in setting a trail. Jesse was still lingering in jail in July, awaiting his day in court. And that is when it really hit the fan.

Things had been rough on Mrs. Pomeroy with her youngest son in jail. She continued to vociferously express her total belief in his innocence. Unfortunately, a son charged with capital murder wasn't her only problem. Business at the dressmaking shop was bad and probably not improved by the increasing notoriety of the Pomeroy name. She was forced to close the store a month after Jesse's arrest. She continued to operate out of her home.

One person's misfortune is another's good luck. James Nash, owner of an adjacent grocery business, saw this as a golden opportunity to expand. Mrs. Pomeroy had scarcely toted her dummies and sewing machine across the street when he signed the lease and started planning extensive renovations.

In late July, a worker knocking down a

NAUGHTY AS HE NEVER WAS

One of the wildest, and almost wholly spurious accounts of the Pomeroy case appeared in a bad crime book that came out in the late '20s: *Rope, Knife, and Chair* by Guy Logan. The real crimes weren't sensational enough for Mr. Logan. As he described it, "Boys and girls, mostly between the ages of 7 and 10, were lured away, brutally slain and hideously mutilated, and their bodies trussed and bound with cord." In all, 27 bodies were found, most dumped in marshes or buried under rubbish. But "Several of these innocent victims... were discovered nailed to doorways and posts in quiet dark places, their bodies mutilated with every circumstance of horror." Whew!!

Naturally, parents panicked, none so much as those of 12-year old Albert Pratt. His father hired a guard to escort him to school. The fiend got wind of this and sent Daddy a letter saying this was useless. Albert was lured from school with the old fake note from his parents summoning him home dodge. (The messenger was "Harry Pomeroy", Jesse's "younger brother"). Pratt's body was found two days later.

A victim escaped his clutches soon after and identified Jesse as "The White-Eyed Boy Murderer of Boston." Found insane, Jesse spent a year in an asylum before being released as "cured".

Logan's account of Jesse after his release sticks a little closer to the facts, save when he has searchers excavating the garbage heap behind the Pomeroy store to find remains of another dozen little victims! Such was the uproar that the Governor (who approved the parole) had to resign. Mobs of lynch-minded Bostonians surrounded the courthouse throughout the trial.

You just can't believe everything you read!

wall in the cellar of the old dress shop noticed some bright fabric sticking out of a pile of ashes and rubbish. He reached down and gave it a tug. He received the shock of his life when a child's skull rolled out of the rubbish. The police were quickly summoned.

After uncovering what was left of the body, the police had a pretty good idea who the corpse was. They brought in Mrs. Curran, mother of the girl that had vanished so mysteriously the previous month. The distraught mother identified the clothes as the ones Katie had been wearing the day she disappeared. The distressed woman exclaimed, "Oh, could she have been drowned. Anything, but such a death as this!" The police had to physically restrain her from taking remains, by now half skeleton, home with her.

Word of the discovery quickly spread through the neighborhood. No one had any doubts who might be responsible for this latest atrocity. A crowd gathered on the block, murmuring angrily about Jesse's premature release and fomenting vague plans to do something. The police took Mrs. Pomeroy and Charles into custody, as much as material witnesses as for their own safety. It was not a good time on that block of Broadway to have the surname 'Pomeroy'.

At first, Jesse was indifferent when he heard news of the body. (He was really good at this.) But the police had a double cause for suspicion: not only had Katie's body been found the Pomeroy store's former quarters, Jesse had apparently been asking around the jail during the previous weeks if there was a reward offered for locating her body. When confronted with these accusations, Jesse coolly denied any knowledge of the body and called the stories lies that couldn't be proven. He helpfully added that he didn't think his mother committed the murder, either. In

fact, the only thing that seemed to bother him was that she was in jail, too.

Jesse later confessed Katie's murder to the Chief of Police. As he told the story then, Katie had gone out that morning to buy a "school card." Stepping into the Pomeroy store by mistake, she asked Jesse, who was manning the counter alone, if he had any. Being a dressmaking shop, of course they didn't. But Jesse, ever the boy fiend, hit on a scheme instantly:

> I told her there was a store downstairs... I followed her, put my left arm about her neck, my hand over her mouth, and with my knife in my right hand cut her throat. I then dragged her to and behind the water closet... and put some stones and ashes on the body.

When a cop reading the confession back misread "cellar" for "stairs", Jesse was quick to correct him. "I didn't say 'cellar', I said 'stairs', for if I had said cellar she wouldn't have gone down." However, the surviving parts of Katie's body bore mute witness to the fact that Jesse's attack wasn't so simple. She had been stabbed and mutilated much like the Millen boy. Later, when asked at the inquest why he'd done it, Jesse only said, "I do not know. I couldn't help it. It is here," pointing to his head.

There were some questions raised as to how Katie's body could have avoided detection all those months. As it turned out, the cellar of the store was a real mess. When the police checked it after Katie disappeared, they apparently took one look at the piles of junk and garbage, figured nothing had been disturbed recently, and left to search elsewhere. The tenants above the store later noticed a rank odor, but, as the papers described it:

> They continued their search for defunct vermin in the crannies of the cellar and behind the ceiling, little suspecting the real cause of their inconvenience.

Although contemporary accounts make no mention, the smell may have played no small part in the failure of Mrs. Pomeroy's dress store.

In December, Jesse was tried for the Millen murder. Two doctors for the defense testified that Jesse was insane due to some obscure form of epilepsy. To no one's surprise, another doctor brought in for the state thought that while Jesse certainly wasn't normal, neither was he crazy. However, all three medical men concurred on two things. Jesse had no feelings for his victims and felt no remorse for any of his acts. The jury convicted him of first degree murder with a recommendation of mercy despite this unflattering diagnosis. But the judge brushed aside their advice and sentenced Jesse to the gallows anyway.

This set off another storm of controversy. Many prominent men, including Oliver Wendell Holmes, supported commuting Jesse's sentence to life imprisonment on the basis of his tender years. He'd barely turned 15, after all. A commutation petition was quickly filed. But hot on its heels came a counter-petition, "numerously signed by both sexes protesting against it." In the midst of this furor (which wasn't helped when church sexton Thomas Piper clubbed a small girl to death in a Boston belfry), the state's Executive Council formally denied Pomeroy's petition for clemency. The governor needed only to sign a death warrant and set a date to make Jesse only the second child under 16 executed in Massachusetts history.

While the governor pondered, Jesse's *Autobiography* was serialized in a local newspaper. In keeping with a rich tradition in criminal autobiography, Jesse denied all charges against him. His early young victims were all mistaken in their identification:

> Not one of them did or could tell what dress I wore or how my voice sounded--in fact, failed to notice everything a sharp boy would and fell back on the untenable ground of identifying me by my eye.

His original confession came only after being dragged out of bed around midnight and being threatened with "prison for 100 years" (as we shall see, not that much of an exaggeration). His first trial, why, it was no trial. "The complaints were read to me, and

I understood them about as much as I would Greek or Latin." And his conviction? "It was not justice dealt out, but rather injustice."

He was equally glib in discounting the two murders. Confessions be damned. He accounted for his activities on the day of the Millen killing minute by minute. Needless to say, he wasn't anywhere near the marsh. He only confessed and feigned insanity to protect his mother and brother, who had spent five and six weeks in jail respectively. The jury that convicted him consisted of "12 jackasses good and true."

But no one, not even Jesse himself, had as much faith in his innocence as his mother. In letters published in the papers, she repeatedly stated her unshaken belief in her youngest child's complete innocence. She knew Jesse, ever the selfless son, ("...there never was a more kind-hearted boy") confessed only to save her: "I was not surprised--I knew Jesse better than any one and I knew his generous heart...." She bemoaned the cruelties heaped upon her innocent offspring: "I do not doubt that he is insane--driven insane--driven insane by the treatment that was heaped upon us." She knew that Katie's body had been put in the cellar after she vacated the store, and much of the testimony and evidence against Jesse was either contrived or misinterpreted. She angrily blamed Jesse's death sentence as a sop to appease the blood thirsty mothers of Massachussets.*

Meanwhile, the governor wouldn't sign Jesse's death warrant. And when a new governor was elected, he too refused to sign on the dotted line. The Executive Council finally caved in. On August 31, 1876, Jesse's sentence was commuted to life in solitary confinement.

Jesse was transferred to the State Prison at Charlestown. His home for the next 16 years was a boiler-plate lined 10' x 8' x 8' "coke oven" cell built in 1805 to house the insane. Isolated from the prison population, he came in contact with no one save his mother (who visited every month until her death in 1914), prison officials, and perhaps the odd clergyman and a lawyer or two. In the early 1900s, he was transferred to a more modern, but no less solitary, cell.

Jesse did not spend these years of isolation quietly going insane. Number one item on his agenda was escape. Every couple of years, the papers carried stories about his latest effort, which generally never went too much beyond monkeying with the bars. The only notable effort was in 1888, when he dug a small hole through the wall of his cell, broke a gas pipe, let the gas fill the gap between two walls, and lit a match. Typical of his escape schemes, the resulting explosion did not blast out the wall or tear his cell door open. He succeeded only in singing his eyebrows and making a lot of noise. Jesse never came close to busting out of the joint.

Between escape attempts, he became an omnivorous reader and fanatical self-educator. He eventually read all 8000 books in the prison library, picking up a working knowledge of a broad range of subjects and learning several languages, including French, German, Greek, Latin, Spanish, and Italian.

Not too surprisingly, one of his favorite subjects was law. If Jesse couldn't get out one way, he'd do it the other. Over the years, with no official encouragement or the faintest glimmer of a positive response, he bombarded every authority from the Governor to the US Supreme Court with a steady stream of petitions, briefs, and pleas. The arrival of his petition for pardon at the state capitol in Boston was almost an annual event. No less than 12 governors in a row would deny it.

Jesse may have been bettering himself intellectually, but he was far from Nathan

* In one amusing sidelight, Mrs. Pomeroy wrote in one letter to the editor "I have frequently received letters from persons in all parts of the country, principally in the West, asking for some of Jesse's hair and other absurd requests." Yet, the hair people eventually got to her. In a letter to a woman in San Francisco published the following year, she asked if she saw anything in the lock of Jesse's hair indicating innocence.

Leopold* material. A commission of three psychiatrists and the prison physician were appointed to study him and review his case in 1914 after he'd spent 38 years in solitary. They found him to be sane and intelligent, but a cold, paranoid manipulator utterly obsessed with his pardon. Their report stated:

> He takes kindness as a matter of course, is highly egotistical and inclined to dictate to the prison authorities. His only interest in his mother is the aid she can give him in securing his release. He shows no pleasure at seeing her but begins on his case as soon as she comes and talks of nothing else. He is very unreliable on account of his untruthfulness. He thinks everyone is against him and apparently never loses his suspicions for a moment.

Surprisingly, they found Jesse a strong believer in firm punishments for lawbreakers. But when conversation turned to the application of this theory to his case, he became evasive, steering conversation to the "illegality" of his sentence. The commission noted, "His memory is very good except on points the admission of which might weaken his case."

In 1916, the Executive Council finally voted to lift Jesse's solitary confinement. For the first time in 41 years, he was allowed to attend chapel, mingle with the general population, and work in prison industry if he so desired. Not that he did. Commissioner of Corrections A. Warren Stearns, who knew Jesse, wrote in a long article on the case:

> He engaged in no occupation, never participated in prison industries, and was seen as a gradually aging old man, nearly blind, with a tremendous hernia, standing about impassive and solitary, not taking part in any of the social life of the institution.

Gradually, Jesse became the most famous convict in the country. In 1920, when he made his first public appearance since boyhood, it was headline stuff. At the annual inmate minstrel show, he read a 13 stanza poem, one of many pieces he contributed to the prison newspaper under the byline 'Grandpa'. Convicts and staff accorded him a standing ovation.

Later that year, he privately published his first (and apparently only) book, *Selections from the Writings of Jesse Harding Pomeroy*. Reportedly, friends from his boyhood (!) helped him pull this project off. Comprised of a mix of poetry and prose with such stimulating titles as "How I Learned Spanish", "A Boston Brew of Tea, Sir!" and "A La Miss Suffragette", a reviewer concluded that although not bad, "there is nothing in his book of intrinsic merit."

The milestones gradually passed. The judge at his trial, the prosecutor, his lawyer, and all 12 jurors died. His mother visited him every month until her death around 1915. Clarence Darrow threatened to take up his case, blustering, "The State of Massachusetts ought to be in the hands of a receiver for keeping Jesse Pomeroy in prison 50 years. It is an outrage." But nothing further came of this. By the late '20s, Jesse was the state's oldest prisoner.

Despite his anti-social attitudes, Jesse found plenty to keep himself busy in between his never-ending pleas for a pardon. In 1927, one Miss Alice Blackwell wrote a letter to a Boston paper accusing Jesse of being cruel to animals in prison. (This was the subject of many a popular rumor. Prison records, however, record no such offenses.) Jesse was severely offended by this affront to his good reputation. He responded by suing her for libel. The presentation of his case at the trial was hampered by prison officials refusing to give him a furlough to testify on his own behalf. Nonetheless, he won, but it was a hollow victory. He was only awarded $1 in damages.

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* Of Leopold & Loeb fame who kidnapped and killed a young boy in Chicago in 1924 to see if they could get away with it. They didn't. Clarence Darrow saved 'em from the chair, but not from life + 99 years sentences. Loeb was later killed in a homosexual brawl, but Leopold applied himself, became a model inmate and was paroled after 33 years. He lived a quiet life as a hospital technician in Puerto Rico until his death.

In 1929, the warden recommended Jesse for transfer to the State Prison Farm at Bridgewater. Jesse protested vociferously. The only ways he planned to leave Charlestown were via pardon or pine box. He added petitions to block the move to his usual pardon paperwork. But it was all for naught.

The transfer came through in August. Jesse was driven to Bridgewater, his first real ride in an automobile (he'd had one quick spin around the prison yard a few years earlier). Virtually every two-bit pen jockey in the country seized the opportunity to comment on how strange the outside world must seem to this modern Rip van Winkle after 53 years "inside". Poor Jesse unwittingly found himself the spring board for countless bad metaphors and half-baked musings on 50 years of progress.

During the extensively documented 1 hour, 43 minute transfer, the 69-year old murderer appeared very shy and unsure of himself. The crowds and the traffic frightened him; he pulled his cap down and coat up to conceal his face as much as possible. He saw his first elevated train and his first steam shovel. In wonderment, he asked where all the horses had gone. Even though he was now blind in one eye and losing sight in the other, he noticed a headline trumpeting the move of the "boy slayer". He questioned why they were making such a big deal about it. And why did they insist on calling him "slayer"? He drank ginger ale, ate an ice cream cone, and watched a plane take-off. Left unsaid were his thoughts on the young boys he surely saw on the streets.

At Bridgewater, Jesse became even more "dissatisfied, peevish, almost surly." Losing his cell behind Charlestown's austere brick walls and iron bars knocked him from his spot as America's most famous convict. He'd had prestige and special privileges at the State Prison (he used to sell photos of himself for $1.50); now he was just another old codger out on the farm. He had little to say to anyone, and didn't take part in any activities. When they caught him with a bundle of tools and clothes for one last escape attempt, everyone laughed, sure the 70-year old con was just out for the publicity. With his hernia reaching massive proportions, he'd be lucky to make a half mile even without pursuit.

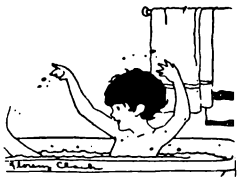
Jesse died two years later on September 29, 1932, two months shy of his 73rd birthday. By then, he'd spent a record-setting 59 years in jails, reformatories, and prisons, much of it in solitary confinement. After his death, there were rumors that he had amassed a considerable fortune from his writings, his brokerage account, and his photo-peddling business. But when they actually got around to counting it, he'd only left an estate valued at $191.

In the years following his death, a small body of legend grew up around him. Some accounts claimed he'd killed dozens of children. Others stuck to the traditional two victims, but hinted darkly he'd tortured many more children who never came forward. Accounts of his 1888 gas-fueled escape attempt became exaggerated to the point where three fellow inmates were killed in the blast, and so on.

But even with the case shorn of its legends, the remaining facts are enough for Jesse to occupy an high position among the ranks of youthful offenders. He is unmatched for his cruelty and continuity. His crimes weren't the behavioral lapses of some little brat, but the vicious acts of someone who loved what he was doing. The only thing that stopped Jesse was getting caught; chances are, if he'd gotten out again, he would have been up to his old tricks again within weeks. Jesse truly deserves his naughtiest boy crown.

A note on sources: The material for this article was drawn primarily from contemporary newspaper accounts (*New York Times, Boston Evening Transcript*), popular magazine articles (*Literary Digest, Outlook, Survey*), an article by Stearns in *The Journal of the Maine Medical Association* and short accounts in some of the more reliable crime books, most notably McDade's *Annals of Murder*. There were also a few pamphlets published on the case at the turn of the century that I, being neither rich nor insane, was unable to access. Sorry. Thus, this is not the definitive article, just the best I can glean via my four library cards (one of which was obtained specifically to get an elusive source for this article) and interlibrary loan. In other words, stones have been left unturned, but they are pretty darned inaccessible and obscure ones.

I would also like to note that there is considerable confusion and disagreement among various sources as to the dates and sequence of Pomeroy's non-fatal attacks. Everyone has the kids being attacked in a different order; the *NY Times* even claimed two of 'em got it on the same day. I went with what I thought was best, but it is possible that Robert Gould was just another victim, not the final victim. Believe me, stuff like this drives me crazy.



FUN WITH CROWD CONTROL

Brooklyn, 1926: In the early 1900s, a mysterious organization named the Black Hand terrorized Italian quarters throughout the country. Victims would receive threatening letters demanding money else horrid consequences (torched pushcarts, demolished stores, kidnapped children) would result. Each letter was signed with an ominous drawing of a black hand.

Whether the Black Hand was an actual secret society or a convenient modus operandi for free lance extortionists makes no difference. The fear was real. Thus, when someone shouted "Black Hand" as kids filed into PS 157 in a heavily Italian part of Brooklyn, the results were most gratifying. It was the moral equivalent of yelling "Atlanta Child Killer" in Atlanta or "Ted Bundy" in a southern sorority house in the early '80s.

Mass confusion broke out. 2500 kids stampeded. The ones inside the building rushed out, while kids in the yard dashed about excitedly. Word spread quickly through the neighborhood, and all the Mamas (mindful of the fate of Giuseppe Verotta--see MCBF #15) descended upon the school en masse to make sure Salvatore and Sophia were OK. It took the riot squad to restore order. Two kids were banged up pretty good in the confusion and any kidnappers frightened off.

Police believed there were no kidnappers, that it was just a boyish prank. One lad, 12-year old Frank Oliva was arrested, but later released. He claimed other boys had started the shouting; he'd only joined in after noticing strange men lurking about. The word on the streets was that some naughty little boys wanted to get the day off school and were willing to start a riot to get it. But it was all for naught. Although it took the entire morning to restore order, afternoon classes went off as scheduled.

LIAR, LIAR, PANTS ON FIRE

The Saga of Louise Butler

Once upon a time, 1928 to be exact, there lived a woman named Louise Butler. Like most black woman of her place and time, her lot in life was a humble one. Home was a small, tumble down house on a plantation in Lowndes County, the heart of Alabama's "Black Belt". Not too far from her doorstep, the Alabama River lazily rolled on its way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Humble though it may have been, her life was far from lonely. Although no husband was in evidence, the house frequently rang with the sounds of childish laughter. For while Louise may not have had much to give, she nonetheless gave a lot. Besides her own children, 12-year old Julia May and a small son, she had generously opened her door to two of her nieces: Mary Cecil "Topsy" Warren, 14, and Anne-Mary Smith, 9.

But Louise was a full grown woman, a woman with needs and desires that can't (or at least shouldn't) be satisfied by even a dozen children. Here, too, Louise had found a measure of contentment. At the time of our tale, she had been "keeping company" with George Yelder, a 55-year old neighbor for several months. She thought the world of George and George, to all outward appearances, reciprocated. Unfortunately, the thoughts George's wife and two daughters had on this cozy arrangement have since been lost to history.

Our tragic story begins with a small piece of pocket change. It was but a humble half dollar that triggered an unimaginable ordeal for the two lovers.

Louise had just returned from an afternoon in Montgomery. Her niece Topsy was proudly brandishing the fateful piece of silver. It must have been a small fortune for a young black girl in rural Alabama in 1928. But Louise was old enough to know that 50¢ pieces don't grow on trees. After a quick investigation, she discovered what had happened. While she had been in Montgomery, that nice Mr. George had stopped by for a visit. When he was finished, he generously gave Topsy this small fortune.

Contemporary accounts are coy about just what George had done with Topsy and why he'd given her the money. But judging from Louise's reaction, it's not too hard to infer what went on that lazy afternoon. She was furious, not so much at George as at Topsy. Perhaps jealousy exacerbated her rage. That afternoon, Topsy received a firm corporal lesson on why one shouldn't mess around with Aunt Louise's man.

Life in the Butler household returned to normal save for one detail. Topsy had vanished. As the days went by and the stories of Topsy's indiscretion and subsequent punishment spread through the countryside, people noticed that Topsy hadn't been seen since the fateful afternoon. Tongues wagged, suspicions rose, and people put things together. If what they arrived at was not the truth, it certainly made considerable sense.

The rumors were so widespread and persistent that eventually Deputy Sheriff "Buck" Meadows went out to Louise's to investigate. Louise wasn't around, but the other three children were. And the stories they told quickly vanquished any cynicism Meadows may have felt about checking up on silly gossip.

For the children had a tale to tell. Their tale was one guaranteed to shock all but the most grizzled lawmen. As they told Meadows, and many other investigators over the coming weeks, not only had they witnessed a blood-curdling murder, they had been accessories before and after the fact.

According to 12-year old Julia, Topsy had gotten quite a beating from her aunt that afternoon. George had come by later.

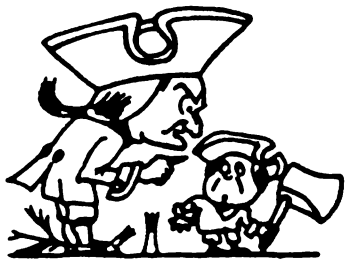
He had a loud argument with Louise. At one point, things grew so heated he threatened to whip Louise "with plow lines". But they quickly made up and George went back to his farm. Not, however, before the pair apparently decided Topsy needed further punishment.

Julia told the stunned lawman George had returned just after dark. The plan quickly went into motion. Louise sent Julia out by the road to stand watch. They then ordered Topsy to come out to the woodpile. Julia heard Topsy cry out, then a sudden, ominous silence. When Julia was summoned to the woodpile a few minutes later, Topsy was dead. Louise and George dragged the dead girl the to chopping block and ordered Julia to chop off the arms. The terrified girl complied. The adults then packed Topsy's dismembered remains in burlap bags and set out for the river. They returned a few minutes later empty handed.

Anne-Mary, Louise's 9-year old daughter, corroborated her cousin's story. She had witnessed the actual murder; peeking through a crack in the wall of her bedroom, she had seen George holding a light as Louise hit Topsy with an ax. The two girls' stories were remarkably consistent, agreeing on all significant details. And they would stick to them under repeated questioning in the weeks ahead.

Meadows arrested Louise upon her return. At first, she denied everything except the part about beating Topsy. That, of course, was justified. She maintained her innocence for days before she finally broke under heavy questioning. In tears, she confessed to the brutal murder. She led the police to the spot on the river where they'd thrown Topsy's body in, carefully weighted down with an auto casing.* She even pointed out the spot where she and George had gotten tangled in the vines during their grim errand.

But just as quickly as she confessed,



she recanted. She continued to protest her innocence vociferously right through her trial.

At Louise's preliminary hearing, Julia and Anne-Mary repeated their stories under oath, which led to George's arrest. Louise was brought to court that afternoon in the hope that she would repeat her confession. Naturally, she refused. But her appearance caused an unexpected reaction among the girls. Julia cried out, "Mama, ain't you going back home with us this evening?" The youngster burst into tears when told this wouldn't be the case. The lawyers helpfully pointed out that if she was lying, now was the time to tell. But Julia was resolute, sobbing "Dey shore done it" even as her aunt held her.

George and Louise were tried separately. Each proceeding drew large crowds of black spectators. According to one of the prosecutors:

> the Court House and adjacent grounds were packed and crowded to the fullest limits with colored citizenry. It was as though a pall of darkness had settled over and around the Temple of Justice.

Sentiment plainly ran against the defendants. Both would be quickly convicted and sentenced to life, even though George's wife and daughters testified he'd been home with a "lame back" on the night in question.

But this was far from the end of our story. Louise and George had barely spent a week in prison before new rumors began to circulate through Lowndes County. These rumors were to the effect that Topsy

* That's what they said. They probably meant an engine block or crank case.

had been spotted alive and well with both arms intact in nearby Dallas County.

Once more, the Sheriff investigated this rumor. And sure enough, on a relative's farm barely 20 miles away, they found Topsy "hale, hearty, and as black as ever." Topsy had lit out for Dallas County after her first taste of discipline and had been staying with relatives ever since, quite unaware of all the commotion her disappearance was causing just over the county line. Louise and George were immediately released on temporary parole, pending a full exoneration by the Board of Pardons.

The whole story of just what prompted little Anne-Mary and Julia to tell such elaborate and monstrous lies so consistently, convincingly, and repeatedly never came out. But the sheriff later said that he suspected one of George's enemies, in an impressive display of vindictiveness, carefully coached the girls after the rumors of Topsy's disappearance became widespread.

But as mysterious as the girls' motives may have been, their actions are far from unprecedented. The traditional image of childish innocence has provided a handy cover for the guile of many a naughty child. The machinations of a peach-fuzz faced perjurer fueled many a witch trial of the 16th and 17th century. It wasn't easy; the kids had to mime demonic possession by throwing fits, palm small objects to be "vomited" at the psychological moment, and break into full fledged "convulsions" at the touch of the "witch". Some would crack and admit to the fraud before their victim's hanging, but more than one "witch" went to the gallows to the quiet sniggering of some naughty child.

Nor has it gone away today. Witchcraft is no longer a capital offense, but ritual abuse will do quite nicely, thank you. As mobs of parents descend on the local day care center, torches in hand and "Believe the Children" badges on their chests, their little darlings lounge about the TV room at home, satisfied teacher would never make them stand in the corner again.

NEWSBOYS PLAY ROUGH, Part 2

Dallas, 1932: Harold Moore, 14, was just another Texas newsboy out on the streets pushing papers for pennies. And that March day, he wanted nothing more than to shoot a good, all-American game of craps with a few of his fellow vendors in a vacant building they used for a clubhouse. Unfortunately, a dispute broke out during the contest, and Harold came out on the losing end. The victors bound his hands with strips of cloth, doused him with kerosene, and pushed him against an electric heater. After the flames went out, they had the consideration to untie Harold before they fled, but it was too late. Harold died of his burns at the hospital. According to the newspapers, police were actively seeking several "street gamins" in connection with the torching.

BAD GIRLS DO IT TOO!

White Plains, New York 1933: Little 8-year old Josephine Waropay liked to gossip. And one of her favorite subjects was the precocious sexual exploits of her 12-year old neighbor Mary Kavala with the boys (and some men!) of the neighborhood. Mary did not like this at all, especially because so many of the stories were true. So, one day, she beat Josephine's little head to a pulp, wrapped a few mop strands around her noisy little throat and throttled her to death. Mary's subsequent confession to the murder led to the arrest of the subject of one of Josephine's favorite stories, a 46-year old man, on a morals charge.

BURN, BUM, BURN

Rochester, NY, 1930: James Wright, 69, was just another bum sleeping off a drunk in the town junkyard that sleepy summer afternoon. Unfortunately, three bored urchins messing around the junkpiles discovered him. The sight of the snoozing drunk inspired them to create a great new game.

With a piece of wire, they tied the dozing drunkard to a convenient tree. Then they heaped tinder-dry brush on him, topping off the pile with a few strategically placed lit matches. Slowly the tiny little flames grew to a blazing fire. We can only imagine Wright's sudden transformation from soused somnolent slumberer to shrieking human torch to a soundtrack of peals of childish glee. He died of his burns twelve days later.

The boys responsible for this human bonfire were caught not too long after Wright's death. None of them was older than 11. When asked why they had done it, their only response was the reason cited bored youth everywhere: "just for fun.".

LITTLE MISS BORGIA

Hamlin, West Virginia 1936: 14-year old Gladys D. was mad. She was furious with her mother, who had the nerve to ground her for no reason. Well, practically none–you can hardly call slipping out to have some fun without first *begging* for permission like some kindergartener grounds for incarceration. Really, it was plain unfair!

To get back, Gladys slipped some poison into the flour for the family bread. Unfortunately (what was she thinking?), the entire clan partook of the lethal loaf the next morning at breakfast. Everyone (save, we hope, Gladys) took ill: Mama, Papa, and six brothers and sisters. All were critically ill at last report, with her father getting worst of it. Gladys was inconsolable. "I didn't mean to hurt him, just mama."

EVERY STUDENT'S DREAM

Camden, New Jersey 1927: Harry Blockson, 13, was apparently a bit of a discipline problem at Genge Grammar School. Teachers rated his conduct as "unsatisfactory", presumably backing up this label with disincentives to encourage Harry to clean up his act. But they had the opposite effect.

Harry was not one to take a slight lightly. He went to the hardware stores around town, asking questions about explosives and bomb making. Word got around to police and Harry was arrested. He confessed to his plan to be rid of the school, but he had no grudge against his fellow students. "I was going to wait until school was out so nobody would be hurt. Then I was going to make sure there would be no school to go back to this Fall".

BABY-SITTING THE NAUGHTY WAY

Richmond, 1932: Two children, ages 6 and 3, were baby-sitting their 10 month old sibling while their parents were at work. Unfortunately, children of their age are notorious for their lack of patience and the baby cried once too often for their tastes. In the cause of peace and quiet, they shoved the fretful infant into a handy wood stove. According to news accounts, "The charred body of the child was found in the heater."

KIDS SAY THE STUPIDEST THINGS

The Wit and Wisdom of Naughty Children

I am tired of home, sick of school, and bored with life.
--14-year old boy explaining why he robbed a store at knifepoint circa 1960

I won't do it again.
--Welsh boy, 9, after drowning 4-year boy, 1947

I took the pram from outside the shop. There was a baby in the pram and I threw it in the water. I just wanted to do it.
--English boy, 9, 1947

I'd like to be a nurse because then I can stick needles in people. I like hurting people.
--Mary Bell, 11, 1968

Murder isn't that bad. We all die sometime.
--Mary Bell, 11, 1968

They were floating about like two drowned puppies.
--William Wild, 13, describing the aftermath of drowning two toddlers, England, 1835

That's where I shoved him in.
--James B. pointing out where he drowned 7-year boy for "being a sissy", Philadelphia, 1937

I was tired of walking. I thought I would stop the train and ride awhile.
--Harry Scherer, 16, explaining why he put a railroad tie across tracks, Tulsa, OK 1943

...just to see what would happen.
--11 & 12 year old boys explaining why they piled bricks on a railroad track, Bayonne, NJ 1934

We just wanted to see what would happen.
--boy, 15, after pushing a 55- gallon drum of tar 50-feet uphill to put on train tracks, Atlanta, GA 1955

When it hit it flashed through my mind 'What if it wrecks the train?' I hadn't thought of that before
--same boys

I am tired of home, sick of school, and bored with life.
--14-year old boy who robbed grocery store at knifepoint circa 1950

If I killed one they would just send me to reform schools again but if I killed them both they'll send me to the chair.

--14-year old boy explaining why he had to kill two playmates, Arkansas, 1960

I hated to kill but I had to--I'm insane.

--note left by 14-year old Ohio boy who shot his father circa 1957

I did not try to rob the Dobrindts, for what do I care for the 2 or 3 years more you are able to give?

--"Cry Baby Bandit" Karl Müller, 15, denying robbing a family of three he killed, Germany, 1927

Ain't dead yet, is you? I'll make you dead.

----Hattie, 9, while hitting 2-year old with an ax circa 1896 for biting her

Because she would not let me go to the picture show.

--boy's reason for shooting and killing his stepmother, Fort Myers, Florida 1940

I appreciate the kindness shown to me and I want to thank everybody.

--George Rogalski, 14, to court after being sentenced to 10 years in prison for a kidnap/murder of a small girl, Chicago 1934

So I could see the fire engines roll!

--Thomas L., 15, explaining why he'd set fires in 10 Manhattan apartment buildings, 1925

I don't know.

--the classic excuse

RHYMES OF CHILDHOOD Pt. 2

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the
burning of the school.
We have tortured all the teachers and
broken all the rules.
We are marching down the aisle now to kill
the principal.
Our gang is marching on.
Glory, glory, hallelujah, teacher hit me with
a ruler.
I hit her on the bean with a rotten tangerine
and there ain't no teacher anymore.

--school yard song

My little brother, he's no good.
Chop him up for firewood.
When he's dead, boil his head.
Make it into gingerbread.

--jump rope rhyme

I had a little brother, his name was Tim.
I put him in the bathtub to see if he could
swim.
He drank all the water, he ate all the soap.
He died last night with a bubble in his
throat.

--jump rope rhyme

NAUGHTY CHILDREN
1640–1960

Being a compendium of the finest vintage tales of beastly brats, middle school murderers, sandbox sex fiends and jiving juvenile delinquents from colonial times through 1960. No matter how creatively brutal and savage the little hoodlums of today may get, they can at best only hope to match the antics of the young scamps of yesteryear. In the world of naughty children, nothing is ever new under the sun.

Naughty Children **3**

An introduction to the shocking antics of our youngest citizens. They've been going at it a lot longer and much harder than you think.

It Had To Start Sometime **6**

From 1642, the tale of the first American youngster to go to the gallows--for a crime that violated not the laws of man, but those of nature. Tsk tsk....

Those Are My Strawberries! **9**

How an childish argument in a sun-dappled meadow ended with a 12-yr. old girl dangling from a noose behind the meeting house.

When Spanking Wasn't Enough **14**

... nooses, gas chambers, and electric chairs worked wonders. A few highlights from America's long history of kiddy executions, including the memorable day they hanged three teenagers in Ohio before an appreciative crowd of 10,000.

Don't Go Near the Water **17**

Summertime, when the thoughts of young 'uns turn to sunshine, swimming holes, and the drowning of their little friends in the latter.

Choo Choo Crash Bang! **22**

Tots who wreck trains, the scourge of the American rails. And when you get right down to it, what red-blooded, All-American boy wouldn't want to derail a train?

The Naughtiest Boy **30**

The long, strange and bloody saga of Jesse Pomeroy, Boston's legendary "Boy Fiend" of the 1870, who was the Jack the Ripper of the junior high school set.

Liar, Liar, Pants on Fire **42**

A child need not resort to violence to accomplish some very naughty things. An innocent face and a glib tongue can work just as well. Remember, "Believe the Children!"

Kids Say the Stupidest Things **46**

Out of the mouths of babes, brats, and baby faced killers come these nuggets of youthful wisdom.